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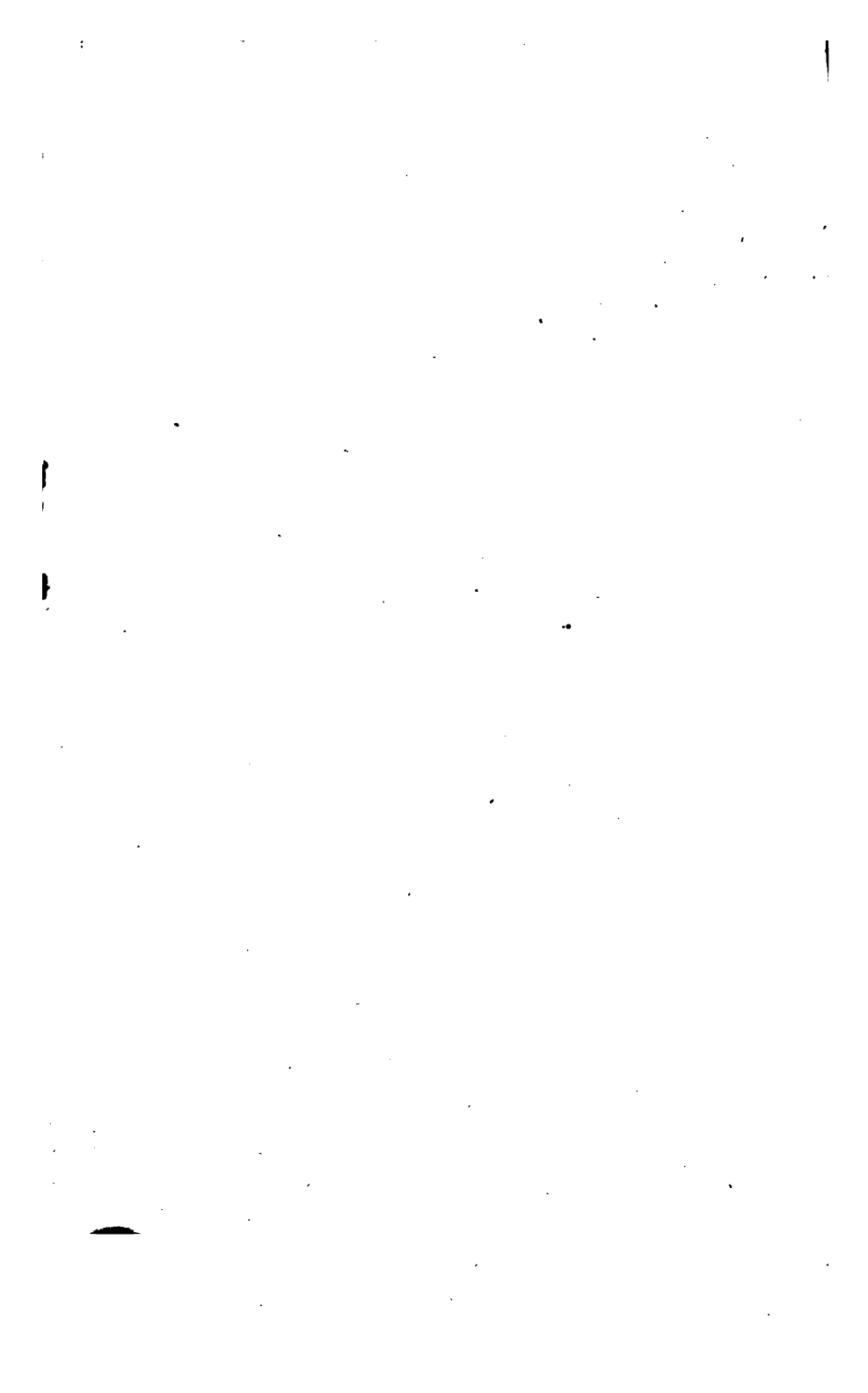
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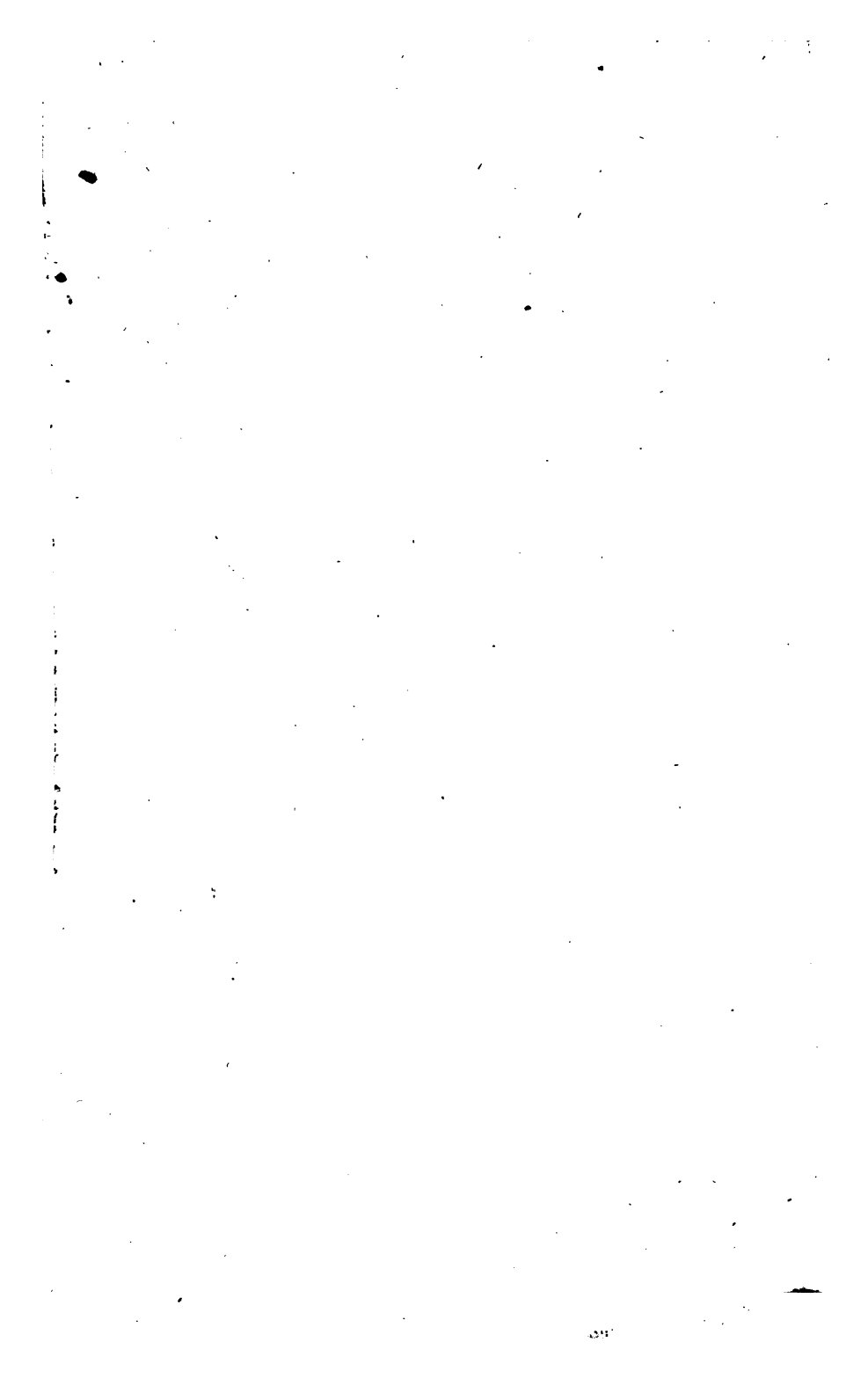


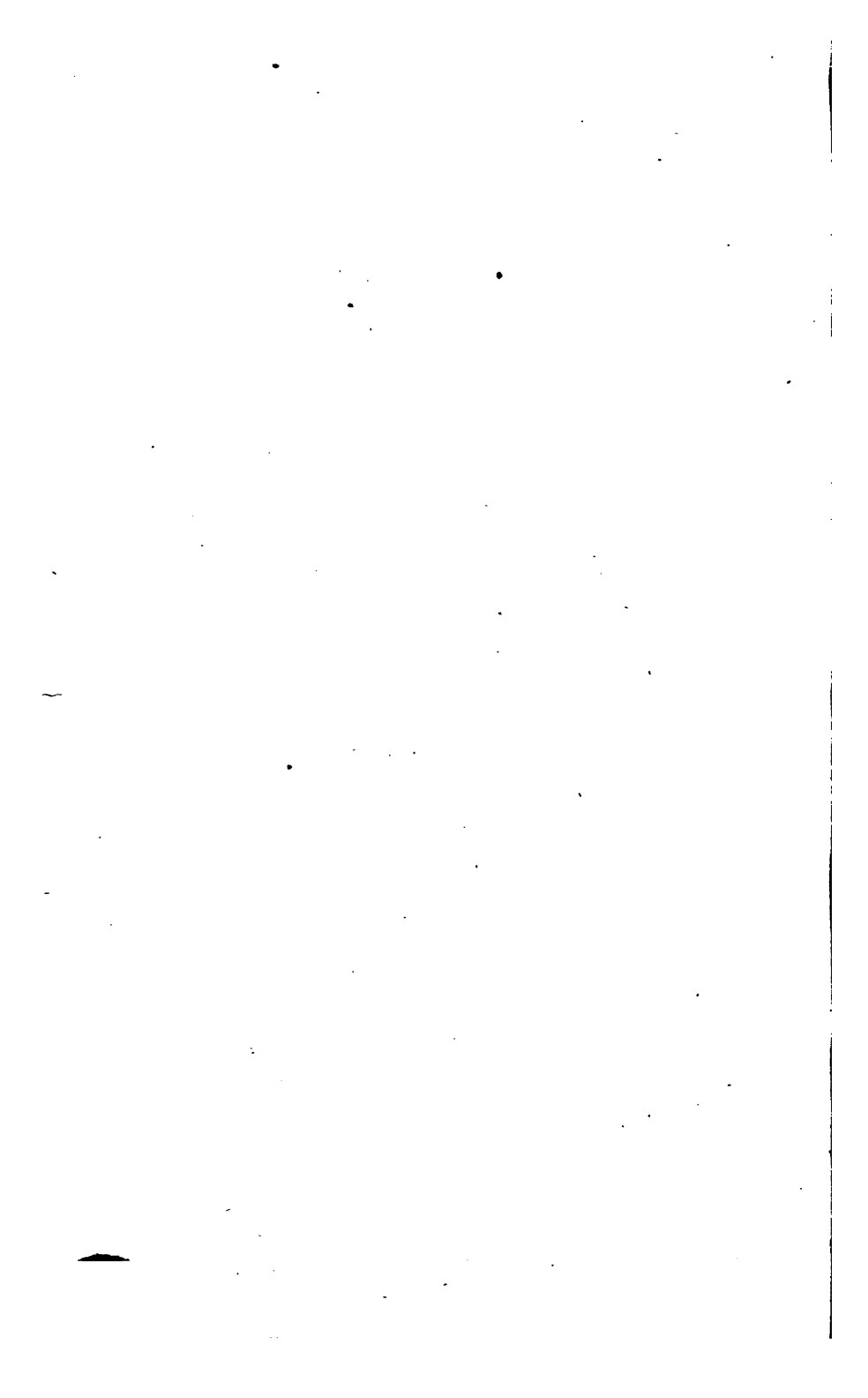
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S E R M O N S,

BY

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S E R M O N I.

On the CAUSES of MEN'S being weary
of LIFE.

JOB X. I.

My soul is weary of my life——

JOB, in the first part of his days, was SERM.
the greatest of all the men of the East. I.
His possessions were large; his family
was numerous and flourishing; his own
character was fair and blameless. Yet
this man it pleased God to visit with
extraordinary reverses of fortune. He
was robbed of his whole substance. His
sons and daughters all perished; and he
himself fallen from his high estate, child-

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A

less

S E R M. less and reduced to poverty, was smitten
 I. with sore disease. His friends came
 about him, seemingly with the purpose
 of administering comfort. But from a
 harsh and ill-founded construction of
 the intention of Providence in his dis-
 asters, they only added to his sorrows
 by unjust upbraiding. Hence those
 many pathetic lamentations with which
 this book abounds, poured forth in the
 most beautiful, and touching strain of
 Oriental poetry. In one of those hours
 of lamentation, the sentiment in the
 text was uttered; *My soul is weary of
 my life*; a sentiment, which surely, if
 any situation can justify it, it was al-
 lowable in the case of Job.

IN situations very different from that
 of Job, under calamities far less severe,
 it is not uncommon to find such a sen-
 timent working in the heart, and some-
 times breaking forth from the lips of
 men. Many, very many there are, who
 on one occasion or other, have experien-
 ced

ced this weariness of life, and been **SEEM**
tempted to wish that it would come to **I.**
a close. Let us now examine in what
circumstances this feeling may be
deemed excusable; in what it is to be
held sinful; and under what restrictions
we may, on any occasion, be permitted
to say, *My soul is weary of my life.*

I SHALL consider the words of the
text in three lights; as expressing,
First, The sentiment of a discontent-
ed man; *Secondly*, The sentiment of
an afflicted man; *Thirdly*, The senti-
ment of a devout man.

I. LET us consider the text as ex-
pressing the sentiment of a discontent-
ed man; with whom it is the effusion
of spleen, vexation and dissatisfaction
with life, arising from causes neither
laudable nor justifiable. There are
chiefly three classes of men who are
liable to this disease of the mind: the
idle; the luxurious; the criminal.

SERM. *First*, THIS weariness of life is often
 I. found among the idle: persons commonly
 in easy circumstances of fortune, who
 are not engaged in any of the laborious
 occupations of the world, and who are,
 at the same time, without energy of mind
 to call them forth into any other line of
 active exertion. In this languid, or rather
 torpid state, they have so many vacant
 hours, and are so much at a loss how to
 fill up their time, that their spirits utterly
 sink; they become burdensome to themselves,
 and to every one around them; and drag
 with pain the load of existence. What a
 convincing proof is hereby afforded, that man
 was designed by his Creator to be an active
 being, whose happiness is to be found not
 merely in rest, but in occupation and
 pursuit? The idle are doomed to suffer
 the natural punishment of their inactivity
 and folly; and for their complaints of the
 tirefomeness of life there is no remedy
 but to awake from the dream of sloth,
 and to fill up with proper

Men's being weary of Life.

5

per employment; the miserable vacancies S E R M.
of their days. Let them study to be- I.
come useful to the world, and they
shall soon become less burthenſome to
themselves. They shall begin to enjoy
existence; they shall reap the rewards
which providence has annexed to vir-
tuous activity; and have no more cause
to say, *My soul is weary of my life.*

Next, THE luxurious and the dissipated
form another class of men, among whom
such complaints are still more frequent.
With them they are not the fruit of idle-
ness. These are men who have been
busied enough; they have run the whole
race of pleasure; but they have run it
with such inconsiderate speed, that it
terminates in weariness and vexation of
spirit. By the perpetual course of dissipa-
tion in which they are engaged; by the
excesses which they indulge; by the rio-
tous revel, and the midnight or rather
morning hours to which they prolong
their festivity; they have debilitated
their


SERM. their bodies, and worn out their spirits.
 I. Satiated with the repetition of their accustomed pleasures, and yet unable to find any new ones in their place; wandering round and round their former haunts of joy, and ever returning disappointed; weary of themselves, and of all things about them, their spirits are oppressed with a deadly gloom, and the complaint bursts forth of odious life and a miserable world. Never are these complaints more frequent than at the close of rounds of amusement, and after a long repetition of festal pleasures; when the spirits which had been forced up, as by some intoxicating drug, to an unnatural height, subside into profound dejection. What increases the evil is, that it is not among the infirm and the aged, but among the young, the gay, and the prosperous, who ought to be reputed the happiest men, that this distaste of life most frequently prevails.

WHEN persons of this description, in their peevish and splenetic hours, exclaim,

claim, *My soul is weary of my life*, let SERM. them know, let them be assured, that 1. this is no other than the judgment of God overtaking them for their vices and follies. Their complaints of misery are entitled to no compassion; nay, they are sinful, because they arise from a sinful cause; from a mind broken and debased by luxury and corruption. They are the authors of their own misery, by having thrown away on the follies of the world those powers which God had bestowed on them for nobler ends.—Let them return to the duties of men and christians. Let them retreat from frivolity, and abstain from excess. Let them study temperance, moderation, and self-command. By entering on a virtuous and manly course of action, and applying to the honourable discharge of the functions of their station, they will acquire different views. They will obtain more real enjoyment of life, and become more willing to prolong it.—But, after the warnings which God has given them of their
their

SERM. their misbehaviour by the inward misery
 I. they suffer, if they still continue to
 run the same intemperate round, and to
 drain pleasure to the last dregs; it shall
 come to pass, that they who now con-
 temn life, and are impatient of its con-
 tinuance, shall be the persons most ea-
 ger to prolong it. When they behold
 it in reality drawing towards a close,
 and are obliged too look forward to
 what is to come after it, they shall be
 rendered awfully sensible of its value.
 They will then grasp eagerly at the fly-
 ing hours; anxious to stop them if they
 could, and to employ every moment that
 remains in repairing their past errors, and
 in making their peace if possible, with
 God and heaven. According as *they*
have sown, they now reap. They are re-
 duced *to eat the fruit of their own ways,*
and to be filled with their own devices.

THERE remains still a third class of
 those who from discontent are become
 weary of life, such as have embittered it
 to

to themselves by the consciousness of **S E R M.**
criminal deeds. They have been, per- ^{1.} 
haps, unnatural to their parents, or
treacherous to their friends; they have
violated their fidelity; have ensnared and
ruined the innocent; or have occasioned
the death of others. There is no won-
der that such persons should lose their
relish for life. To whatever arts they
may have recourse for procuring a de-
ceitful peace, conscience will at times
exert its native power, and shake over
them its terrific scourge. The internal
misery they endure has sometimes arisen
to such a height, as has made them ter-
minate, with their own hands, an ex-
istence which they felt to be insupport-
able.—To the complaints of such per-
sons no remedy can be furnished, ex-
cept what arises from the bitterness of
sincere and deep repentance. We can
do no more than exhort them to atone
as much as is in their power for the
evils they have committed; and to fly
to the divine mercy through **Jesus**
Christ

S E R M. Christ for pardon and forgiveness. Let

^{1.}
 } us now,

II. Turn to persons of another description, and consider the sentiment in the text as extorted by situations of distress. These are so variously multiplied in the world, and often so oppressive and heavy, that assuredly it is not uncommon to hear the afflicted complain that they are weary of life: Their complaints, if not always allowable, yet certainly are more excusable than those which flow from the sources of dissatisfaction already mentioned. They are sufferers, not so much through their own misconduct, as through the appointment of Providence; and therefore to persons in this situation it may seem more needful to offer consolation, than to give admonition. However, as the evils which produce this impatience of life are of different sorts, a distinction must be made as to the situations which can most excuse it.

SOMETIMES,

SOMETIMES, the exclamation in the **SERM.** text may be occasioned by deep and overwhelming grief. When they whom we had most affectionately loved, and in whom we had placed the felicity of our days, are taken away, our connection with life appears to be dissolved. "Why should we survive those to whom our souls were tied? Would to God we had died before them! Now when they are gone, all pleasure and hope is gone as to us. To us the sun no longer shines with his usual brightness. No longer cheerfulness invests the face of nature. On every object a sad gloom appears to rest; and every employment of life is become an oppressive burden." With the feelings of those who are thus distressed we naturally sympathise. They are frequently the feelings of the most virtuous and amiable minds: And yet such persons must be told, that grief may be indulged so far as to become immoderate and improper. There are bounds

SERM. bounds which prescribed to it both by
 I. reason and by religion. A Christian
 ought not to *mourn like those who have no
 hope*. While he feels his sorrows as a man,
 he should also study to bear them like a
 man, with fortitude; and not abandon
 himself to feeble and fruitless melanco-
 ly. Let him have recourse to a stren-
 uous discharge of the duties of his sta-
 tion, and consider it as incumbent on
 him to make the best improvement that
 he can of those comforts which Provi-
 dence has still left in his possession.

AGAIN; it sometimes happens that,
 apart from grief, great reverses of world-
 ly fortune give rise to the lamentation
 in the text. This was the case with Job
 himself. A sudden fall from opulence
 into indigence and want; some undeser-
 ved disgrace incurred, or some unexpect-
 ed cloud thrown over former reputation
 and fame; the unkindness and desertion
 of friends, or the insolent triumph of e-
 nemies, are apt to overwhelm the minds
 of men with gloom, and to reduce them
 to

to be weary of life. To persons under SERM. such calamities, sympathy is due. That ^{I.} sympathy, however, will be proportioned to the degree in which we consider them as free from blame in the misfortunes which they suffer. As far as, through their own misconduct and vice, they have been the authors to themselves of those misfortunes, we withdraw our pity. The burthen which they have brought on themselves we leave them to bear as they can; and with little concern we hear them exclaim that their *souls are weary of life*.—Not only so, but even in cases where calamities have fallen on the innocent, to the pity which we feel for them will be joined a secret contempt, if we perceive that together with their prosperity, their courage and fortitude have also forsaken them. To abandon themselves to dejection carries no mark of a great or a worthy mind. Instead of declaring that his *soul is weary of his life*, it becomes a brave and a good man, in the evil day, with firmness to maintain

S E R M. maintain his post; to bear up against the storm; to have recourse to those advantages which, in the worst of times, are always left to integrity and virtue; and never to give up the hope that better days may yet arise.

It is good for persons in such situations to remark that, though Job was for a long while severely tried by a variety of distresses, yet his condition was not left finally unhappy. On the contrary, the goodness of that God whom he had served returned at last, to shine upon him with greater brightness than ever. His riches were restored to him twofold. The losses in his family were repaired by a new offspring. His name became again renowned in the East; and *the latter end of Job*, we are told, *was more blessed than the beginning*.

But still, it may be asked, will not the continuance of long and severe disease justify the exclamation in the text, *My soul is weary of my life?* To persons who

who are forsaken by all the blessings of S E R M. health, and who have no prospect left, ^{I.} but that of lingering under sickness or pain, Job's complaint may assuredly be forgiven more than to any others. Tho' it might be suggested to them, that even in old age and sickness, except in very extreme cases, some resources are always left, of which they may avail themselves for relief; yet it must be admitted, that lawfully they may wish their sufferings to be brought to an end. Still, however, they must remember, that resignation to the pleasure of heaven continues to be their duty to the last. As long as any part remains to be acted, as long as their continuance in the world can serve any valuable purpose, it is more honourable to bear the load with magnanimity, than to give way to a querulous and dejected spirit. It remains,

III. To address myself to another order of men, among whom, though more rarely than among those whom I have described,

S E R M. described, the sentiment of the text is to

I.


be found. They are persons who have no particular complaint to make of the injustice of the world, or the afflictions of their state. But they are tired of the vanity of the world, of its insipid enjoyments, and its perpetually revolving circle of trifles and follies. They feel themselves made for something greater and nobler. They are disgusted and hurt with the scenes of wickedness that are often passing before their eyes. Their hearts are warmed with the thoughts of a purer and more perfect existence designed for man; and in the moments of aspiration after it, the exclamation breaks forth, *My soul is weary of my life.--O that I had wings like a dove! for then I would fly away and be at rest. Lo then I would wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest. For I have seen violence and strife in the city. Wickedness is in the midst thereof; deceit and guile de-*
part

*part not from her streets**—In this view S E R M.
the sentiment in the text may sometimes I.
be that of a devout man. But such persons I must admonish, that their devotion, how sincere however, is not altogether of a rational and chastened kind. It was from this temper that, in former ages of the church, the numerous race sprung of anchorets, hermits, and all the various orders who voluntarily abandoned the world, to people the lonely desarts and the monastic retreat. The ordinary course of things seemed below them as candidates for heaven. The concerns of the world appeared unworthy of their attention, and dangerous to their virtue. Breathing after a higher state, they imagined that they could not abstract themselves too much from every earthly amusement, as long as they were forced to remain in this place of exile.

VOL. IV.

B

Let

* Pſal. Iv. 5,—11.

SERM. Let us beware of all such imaginary
^{1.}
 refinements as produce a total disrelish
 of our present condition. They are, for
 the most part, grafted either on disap-
 pointed pursuits, or on a melancholy and
 splenetic cast of mind. They are far
 from contributing to happiness, and are
 inconsistent with all the active virtues of
 man. This life deserves not indeed to
 be put in competition with that blessed
 immortality to which God has raised our
 hopes. But such as it is, it is the gift
 of God. It is the sphere in which his
 wisdom has placed us, and appointed us
 to act our parts. As long as it lasts, we
 must neither slight the duties which it
 requires, nor undervalue the innocent
 enjoyments which it offers. It belongs
 to a man to live among men as his bre-
 thren; which he who declares himself
 weary of life is not qualified to do with
 propriety.

THUS I have placed before you, in
 various views, the sentiment in the text ;
 and

and have shewn in what circumstances, S E R M.
and from what causes, that disrelish of I.
life arises which is often found among
mankind. On a review of the whole,
we cannot but acknowledge, that it is
oftener to be ascribed to our own vices
and follies, than to any other cause.
Among the multitudes in the world, to
whom at this day life is burdensome, the
far greater number is of those who have
rendered it so to themselves. Their idle-
ness, their luxury and pleasures, their
criminal deeds, their immoderate pas-
sions, their timidity and baseness of mind,
have dejected them in such a degree, as
to make them weary of their existence.
Preyed upon by discontent of their own
creating, they complain of life when
they ought to reprehend themselves.

Various afflictions there doubtless are
in the world ; many persons with whom
we have cause to sympathise, and whom
we might reasonably forgive for wish-
ing death to close their sorrows. But of
the evils which embitter life, it must be

S E R M. admitted, that the greater part is such as
 I. we have brought on ourselves; or at least
 such as, if we were not wanting to our-
 selves, might be tolerably supported.
 When we compute the numbers of those
 who are disposed to say, *My soul is weary
 of my life*, some there are to whom this
 sentiment is excuseable; but many more
 among whom it is in no way justifiable.
 I admit that, among the worthiest and
 the best, there may be dark moments
 in which some feeling of this nature may
 be apt to intrude upon their minds. But
 with them they are only moments of
 occasional and passing gloom. They
 soon recall the vigour of their minds;
 and return with satisfaction to the dis-
 charge of the duties, and to a participa-
 tion of the enjoyments, of life.

One great cause of men's becoming
 weary of life is grounded on the mista-
 ken views of it which they have formed,
 and the false hopes which they have en-
 tertained from it. They have expected a
 scene of enjoyment; and when they meet
 with

with disappointments and distresses, they S E R M.
complain of life, as if it had cheated and I.
betrayed them. God ordained no such
possession for man on earth as continued
pleasure. For the wisest purposes he de-
signed our state to be chequered with
pleasure and pain. As such let us receive
it, and make the best of what is doomed
to be our lot. Let us remain persuaded,
that simple and moderate pleasures are
always the best; that virtue and a good
conscience are the surest foundations of
enjoyment; that he who serves his God
and his Saviour with the purest intenti-
ons; and governs his passions with the
greatest care, is likely to lead the happiest
life. Following these principles, we shall
meet with fewer occasions of being wea-
ry of life; we shall alway find some sa-
tisfactions mixed with its crosses; and
shall be enabled to wait with a humble
and contented mind till the Almighty, in
his appointed time, finish our state of tri-
al, and remove us to a more blessed abode.

S E R M O N II.

On CHARITY as the End of the Com-
MANDMENT.

I TIMOTHY i. 5.

*Now the end of the commandment is charity
out of a pure heart, and of a good consci-
ence, and of faith unfeigned.*

S E R M. II. **I**T appears from this chapter, that one design of the Apostle, in writing to Timothy, was to guard him against certain corrupters of Christian doctrine, who had already arisen in the church. To their false representations of religion he opposes that general view of it which is given in the text. Such summaries of religion

religion frequently occur in the sacred S E R M,
 writings; and are extremely useful. By II.
 the comprehensive energy with which
 they express the great lines of our duty,
 they both imprint them on our memory,
 and bring them home to our conscience
 with force. In the progress of this dis-
 course, I hope to make it appear, that
 the words of the text afford a most en-
 larged and instructive view of religion
 in all its chief parts.

The Apostle pronounces charity to be
the end or scope of the commandment, that
 is, of the law of God. At the same time,
 in order to prevent mistakes on this most
 important subject, he subjoins to charity
 certain adjuncts, as necessary to qualify
 it, and to render the Christian character
 complete. These are the *pure heart*, the
good conscience, and *faith unfeigned*. In
 treating of these, I shall shew the nature
 of their connexion with charity, and the
 importance of their being always united
 with it,

The

S E R M. *The end of the commandment is charity.*

II.

Charity is the same with benevolence or love; and is the term uniformly employed, in the New Testament, to denote all the good affections which we ought to bear towards one another. It consists not in speculative ideas of general benevolence floating in the head, and leaving the heart, as speculations too often do, untouched and cold. Neither is it confined to that indolent good nature, which makes it rest satisfied with being free from inveterate malice, or ill-will to our fellow-creatures, without prompting us to be of service to any. True charity is an active principle. It is not properly a single virtue; but a disposition residing in the heart, as a fountain whence all the virtues of benignity, candour, forbearance, generosity, compassion, and liberality, flow, as so many native streams. From general good will to all, it extends its influence particularly to those with whom we stand in nearest connection, and who are directly within the sphere of

of our good offices. From the country S E R M.
or community to which we belong, it II.
descends to the smaller associations of
neighbourhood, relations, and friends ;
and spreads itself over the whole circle
of social and domestic life. I mean not
that it imports a promiscuous undistin-
guishing affection, which gives every
man an equal title to our love. Cha-
rity, if we should endeavour to carry it
so far, would be rendered an impracti-
cable virtue, and would resolve itself
into mere words, without affecting the
heart. True charity attempts not to shut
our eyes to the distinction between good
and bad men ; nor to warm our hearts
equally to those who befriend and those
who injure us. It reserves our esteem
for good men, and our complacency for
our friends. Towards our enemies it
inspires forgiveness and humanity. It
breathes universal candour, and liberali-
ty of sentiment. It forms gentleness of
temper, and dictates affability of man-
ners. It prompts corresponding sympa-
thies

S E R M. thies with them who rejoice and them
 II. who wœp. It teaches us to flight and
 despise no man. Charity is the comfort-
 er of the afflicted, the protector of the
 oppressed, the reconciler of differences,
 the intercessor for offenders. It is faith-
 fulness in the friend, public spirit in the
 magistrate, equity and patience in the
 judge, moderation in the sovereign, and
 loyalty in the subject. In parents it is
 care and attention; in children it is re-
 verence and submission. In a word, it
 is the soul of social life. It is the sun
 that enlivens and cheers the abodes of
 men. It is *like the dew of Hermon*, says
 the Psalmist, *and the dew that descendeth
 on the mountains of Zion, where the Lord
 commanded the blessing, even life for ever-
 more**.

SUCH charity, says the text, is *the end
 of the commandment*. This assertion of the
 Apostle

* Psal. cxxxiii. 3.

Apostle is undoubtedly consonant to all S E R M.
that reason can suggest on the subject of II.
religion. For, on considering the nature
of the Supreme Being, reason gives us
much ground to believe, that the chief
design of all the commandments which
he has given to men, is to promote their
happiness. Independent and self-suffici-
ent, that Supreme Being has nothing to
exact from us for his own interest or fe-
licity. By our services he cannot be
benefited, nor by our offences injured.
When he created the world, it was be-
nevolence that moved him to confer
existence. When he made himself
known to his creatures, benevolence in
like manner moved him to give them
laws for their conduct. Benevolence is
the spring of legislation in the Deity, as
much as it was the motive of creation.
He issued his commands on earth on
purpose that by obedience to them, his
creatures might be rendered happy
among themselves in this life, and
be prepared for greater happiness
in another. Charity, especially when
joined

S E R M. joined with purity, good conscience, and
 II. faith, is obviously the great instrument
 for this purpose; and therefore must
 needs possess the chief and primary place
 in the laws of God.

Accordingly, throughout the New Testament, it is uniformly presented to us in the same light in which it is placed by the text. This is known to all who have any acquaintance with the sacred books. Charity is termed *the fulfilling of the law*, and *the bond of perfectness*. It was assumed by our blessed Lord as the characteristical distinction of his disciples; and in that magnificent eulogium which the Apostle Paul pronounces upon it, in the thirteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, it is expressly preferred by him to *faith* and *hope*. This deserves to be seriously considered by those who are apt to undervalue charity, as an appendage of what they contemptuously call *Morality*; while they confine true religion to some favourite tenets and observances of their own, which they consider

der as comprehending the sum of what S E R M.
is acceptable to God. Such persons show II.
themselves profoundly ignorant of the
nature of religion, and may too often be
suspected of being strangers to its influ-
ence. For, as the apostle John reasons,
*He that loveth not his brother, whom he
hath seen, how can he love that God whom
he hath not seen* ?*

AT the same time, while I ascribe to
charity that high place in the system of
religion, which justly belongs to it, I am
not to be understood as confining all re-
ligion to this disposition alone. With
much wisdom and propriety, the text
hath annexed to it certain adjuncts,
without which neither the character of a
good man can be completed, nor charity
itself exercised to advantage. To the con-
sideration of these I now proceed ; and
I enter the more readily on this branch
of

* 1 John iv, 20,

S E R M. of the subject, as there is ground to believe, that many pretend to possess charity, without properly understanding its nature and efficacy. There has been always an unhappy tendency among men to run to extremes, on one side or other, in matters of religion. As one set of men, who employ all their zeal on right belief, are prone to undervalue good practice : so another set, who wish to be esteemed rational Christians, are inclined to rest the whole of their duty on charitable deeds, while they overlook certain dispositions and habits which ought always to accompany them. It is therefore of importance, that the mistakes of both these classes of men should be rectified, in order that religion may be held forth to the world in its complete form, and in its full and undiminished lustre.

THE first qualification of charity pointed out in the text is purity; *charity out of a pure heart*. Purity includes the virtues which belong to the individual, considered

considered in himself, and with respect S E R M.
to the government of his desires and II.
pleasures. It hath its seat in the heart;
but extends its influence over so much
of the outward conduct, as to form a
great and material part of the character.
They are only the *pure in heart*, we are
told by our Saviour, *who can see God**.
It is also true, that they are only the *pure
in heart* who can properly discharge their
duties towards mankind. Inordinate love
of pleasure, intemperance, sensuality,
and a course of irregular life, are incon-
sistent, not only with the general cha-
racter of a good man, but also with the
peculiar exercises of charity and bene-
volence. For nothing is more cer-
tain, than that habits of licentious in-
dulgence contribute to stifle all the
good affections; to harden the heart;
to nourish that selfish attachment to
our own vicious pleasures which ren-
ders us insensible to the circumstan-
ces

* Matth. v. 8.

S E R M. ces and wants of others. A profligate
 II. man is seldom found to be a good husband, a good father, or a beneficent neighbour. How many young persons have at first set out in the world with excellent dispositions of heart ; generous, charitable, and humane ; kind to their friends, and amiable among all with whom they had intercourse ? And yet how often have we seen all those fair appearances unhappily blasted in the progress of life, merely through the influence of loose and corrupting pleasures ; and those very persons who promised once to be blessings to the world, sunk down, in the end, to be the burthen and nuisance of society ? The profusion of expence which their pleasures occasion, accounts in a great measure for the fatal reverse that takes place in their character. It not only drains the sources whence the streams of beneficence should flow, but often obliges them to become oppressive and cruel to those whom it was
 their

their duty to have patronised and supported. SERM.
II.

Purity of heart and conduct must therefore be held fundamental to charity and love, as well as to general piety and virtue. The licentious, I know, are ready to imagine, that their occasional deeds of bounty and liberality will atone for many of their private disorders. But, besides that such plans of compensation for vices, by some supposed virtues, are always fallacious, the licentious may be assured, that it is an appearance only of charity, not the reality of it, to which they can lay claim. For that great virtue consists not in occasional actions of humanity, in fits of kindness or compassion, to which bad men may be prompted by natural instinct; but in the steady and regular-exercise of those good affections, and the discharge of those important duties towards others, for which the licentious are in a great measure disqualified. Their criminal propensities direct their inclinations to very different objects and

VOL. IV. C pursuits;

B. E. R. M. pursuits; and often determine them to
 II. sacrifice the just rights of others, some-
 times to sacrifice the peace and the re-
 putation of the innocent, to the gratifi-
 cation of their passions. Such is the per-
 nicious influence which the love of plea-
 sure has on the good qualities of its de-
 voted votaries. The impure heart is like
 the stagnant and putrifying lake, which
 sends forth its poisonous exhalations to
 corrupt and wither every plant that
 grows on its banks.

THE second qualification annexed to
 Charity, in the text, is, that it be of a
 good conscience. By this I understand the
 Apostle to mean, that charity be in full
 consistency with justice and integrity;
 that the conscience of the man who pur-
 poses to perform actions of benevolence,
 be free from the reproach of having ne-
 glected the primary duties of equity.
 For, undoubtedly, justice is a virtue pri-
 mary to charity; that is, it must go be-
 fore it in all its exertions. One must first
 do

do justly before he can pretend that he loves mercy. — Religion, my friends, in order to render it useful, to mankind, must be brought down by its teachers from the sublimity of speculation to the functions and occupations of ordinary life. It is my duty to admonish you, that you must, in the first place, be fair in all your dealings with others: you must discharge the debts you owe; you must pay the wages due to your servants and dependents; you must provide for your own family, and be just to the claims of relations; then, and then only, you can, from a good conscience, as the text enjoins, perform acts of generosity and mercy.

This leads to a reflection which here deserves our attention; that, in order to fulfil that *charity which is the end of the commandment*, œconomy, and good order in private life, ought to be carefully studied by all Christians. This is more closely connected with a good conscience, than many seem inclined to admit. Oeconomy, when prudently and temperate-

S E R M. ly conducted, is the safeguard of many virtues; and is in a particular manner favourable to the exertions of benevolence. He who by inconsiderate conduct is injuring his circumstances, will probably in time lose the inclination, and certainly is depriving himself of the means of being serviceable to his brethren. Some important exertions, indeed, there are of charity, which have no connection with giving or bestowing. Candour, forgiveness, gentleness, and sympathy, are due to our brethren at all times, and in every situation of our own fortune. The poor have opportunities for displaying these virtues, as well as the rich. They who have nothing to give, can often afford relief to others, by imparting what they feel. But, as far as beneficence is included in charity, we ought always to remember, that justice must, in the first place, be held inviolably sacred.

The wisdom of scripture remarkably appears, in the connexion pointed out by the text between *charity* and *good conscience*

science or integrity; a connexion which I S E R M.
apprehend is often not attended to so II.
much as it deserves. Among the frugal
and industrious, great regard is com-
monly paid to justice. They will not
defraud. They will not take any un-
lawful advantage in their dealings :
and satisfied with this degree of *good*
conscience, they are strangers to that
charity, which is the *end of the com-*
mandment. They are hard and unfeel-
ing. They are rigid and severe in
their demands. They know nothing of
humanity, forgiveness, or compassion.—
Among another class of men, who have
been more liberally educated, and who
are generally of a higher rank in life, jus-
tice is apt to be considered as a virtue less
noble than charity ; and which may, on
some occasions be dispensed with. They
are humane perhaps, and tender in their
feelings. They are easy to their depend-
ents. They can be liberal, even to profu-
sion. While, at the same time, they are
accumulating debts, which they know
themselves unable to discharge. Their
affairs

SERM. affairs are allowed to run into confusion.

II.

Oeconomy and good order are neglected, The innocent, in great numbers, suffer materially through their mismanagement: And all the while they assume to themselves the praise of being generous and good-hearted men. This surely is not that *charity* which the Gospel enjoins; and which, in its very essence, involves *good conscience* and integrity. He who pretends to do good to his brethren, without first doing them justice, cannot be accounted their real friend. True charity is not a meteor, which occasionally glares; but a luminary, which, in its orderly and regular course, dispenses a benignant influence.

THE third and last adjunct connected in the text with charity is, that it be *of faith unfeigned*. Faith, in the scripture sense of it, includes the whole of religious principles respecting God, and respecting Christ. Good principles, without good practice, I confess, are nothing, they are of no avail in the sight of
 God

God; nor in the estimation of wise S. B. M.
men. But practice not founded on II.
principle is likely to be always unsta-
ble and wavering; and, therefore, the
faith of religious principles enters, for a
very considerable share, into the proper
discharge of the duties of charity.

It will be admitted that, without faith,
our duties towards God cannot be pro-
perly performed. You may be assured
that your duties towards men will al-
ways greatly suffer from the want of it.
Faith, when pure and genuine, supplies
to every part of virtue, and in particular
to the virtue of charity, many motives
and assistances, of which the unbelie-
ver is destitute. He who acts from
faith acts upon the high principle of re-
gard to the God who hath made him,
and to the Saviour who redeems him;
which will often stimulate him to his
duty when other principles of benevo-
lence become faint and languid, or are
crossed by opposite interests. When he
considers

S E R M. considers himself as pursuing the appro-
 II. bation of that divine Being, from whom
 love descends, a sacred enthusiasm both
 prompts, and consecrates, his charitable
 dispositions. Regardless of men, or of
 human recompence, he is carried along
 by a higher impulse. He acts with the
 spirit of a follower of the Son of God,
 who not only has enjoined love, but has
 enforced it by the example of laying
 down his life for mankind. Whatever
 he does in behalf of his fellow-creatures,
 he considers himself as doing, in some de-
 gree, to that divine Person, who hath
 said, *Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one
 of the least of these my brethren, ye have
 done it unto me**. Hence charity is with
 him not only a moral virtue, but a Chris-
 tian grace. It acquires additional dignity
 and energy from being connected with
 the heavenly state and the heavenly in-
 habitants. He mingles with beings of a
 higher order, while he is discharging his
 duty.

* Matth. xxv. 40.

duty to his fellow-creatures on earth; S E R M. 2
and by joining faith and piety to good ^{II.}
works, he completes the character of a
Christian.

THUS I have endeavoured to explain the full sense of that comprehensive view of religion which is given in the text. I have shown in what respects *charity* joined with *the pure heart, the good conscience, and faith unfeigned*, forms the end of the commandment. Let us ever keep in view those essential parts of a virtuous character, and preserve them in their proper union. Thus shall our religion rise into a regular and well-proportioned edifice, where each part gives firmness and support to another. If any one of those material parts be wanting in the structure; if, out of our system of charity, either purity, or justice, or faith, be left, there will be cracks and flaws in the building which prepare its ruin.

This is indeed one of the greatest and most frequent errors of men, in their
moral

S E R M. moral conduct. They take hold of vir-
 II. tice by pieces and corners only. Few
 are so depraved as to be without all sense
 of duty, and all regard to it. To some
 moral qualities, which appear to them
 amiable or estimable, almost all men lay
 claim; and on these they rest their worth,
 in their own estimation. But these scat-
 tered pieces of virtue, not uniting into
 one whole, nor forming a consistent cha-
 racter, have no powerful influence on
 their general habits of life. From various
 unguarded quarters they lie open to
 temptation. Their lives are full of con-
 tradiction, and perpetually fluctuate be-
 tween good and evil. Virtue can nei-
 ther rise to its native dignity, nor attain
 its proper rewards, until all its chief parts
 be joined together in our character, and
 exert an equal authority in regulating
 our conduct.

SERMON

S E R M O N III.

On our LIVES being in the Hand of
GOD.

[Preached at the beginning of a New Year.*]

PSALM XXXI. 13.

My times are in thy hand.—

THE sun that rolls over our heads, S E R M.
the food that we receive, the rest III.
that we enjoy, daily admonish us of a
superior power, on whom the inhabitants
of the earth depend for light, life, and
subsistence. But as long as all things
proceed

* January 6th, 1793.

S E R M. proceed in their ordinary course ; when
 III. day returns after day with perfect simi-
 larity: when our life seems stationary,
 and nothing occurs to warn us of any ap-
 proaching change, the religious senti-
 ments of dependance are apt to be for-
 gotten. The great revolutions of time,
 when they come round in their stated
 order, have a tendency to force some im-
 pressions of piety even on the most un-
 thinking minds. They both mark our
 existence on earth to be advancing to-
 wards its close, and exhibit our condition
 as continually changing; while each re-
 turning year brings along with it new
 events, and at the same time carries us
 forwards to the conclusion of all. We
 cannot, on such occasions avoid perceiv-
 ing, that there is a Supreme Being who
 holds in his hands the line of our existence,
 and measures out to each of us our allot-
 ted portion of that line. Beyond a certain
 limit, we know that it cannot be extend-
 ed; and long before it reach that limit it
 may be cut asunder by an invisible hand,
 which

which is stretched forth over all the inhabitants of the world. Then naturally arises the ejaculation of the text, *My times, O God, are in thy hand.* “ My fate depends on thee. The duration of my life, and all the events which in future days are to fill it, are entirely at thy disposal.”—Let us now, when we have just seen one year close, and another begin, meditate seriously on this sentiment. Let us consider what is implied in *our times being in the hand of God*; and to what improvement this meditation leads.

THE text evidently implies, first, that *our times* are not in our own hand; that, as our continuance in life depends not on ourselves, so the events which are to happen, while life remains, are unknown to us, and not under our own direction. Of this we may behold many a proof, when we look back on the transactions of the year which is just finished. Recollection will readily present
to

S E R M. to us a busy period, filled up with a
^{III}
 mixture of business and amusement, of
 anxieties and cares, of joys and sorrows.
 We have talked, perhaps, and acted
 much. We have formed many a plan;
 in public or in private life, we have been
 engaged in a variety of pursuits. Let me
 now ask, how small a proportion of all
 that has happened could have been fore-
 seen, or foretold by us? How many
 things have occurred, of which we had
 no expectation; some, perhaps, that have
 succeeded beyond our hopes; many,
 also, that have befallen us contrary to
 our wish? How often were each of us
 admonished that there are secret wheels,
 which, unseen by us, bring about the
 revolutions of human affairs; and that,
 while man was devising his way, Provi-
 dence was directing the event!

That scene is now closed. The tale
 of that year has been told. We look for-
 ward to the year which is beginning;
 and what do we behold there?—All, my
 brethren, is a blank to our view: A dark
 unknown

unknown presents itself. We are enter-
ing on an untried, undiscovered coun-
try, where, as each succeeding month
comes forward, new scenes may open;
new objects may engage our attention;
changes at home or abroad, in public or
in private affairs, may alter the whole
state of our fortune. New connections
may be at hand to be formed; or old
ones just about to be dissolved; perhaps,
we may have little more to do with this
world, or with any of its connections;
we may be standing on the verge of time
and life, and on the point of passing
into a new region of existence. In short,
the prospect before us is full of awful
uncertainty. Life and death, prosperity
and adversity, health and sickness, joy
and trouble, lie in one undistinguishable
mass, where our eye can discern nothing
through the obscurity that wraps them up.

While it is thus certain that our times
are not at our own disposal, we are
taught, by the text, that they are *in the*
hand

S.E.R.M.
III.

SERM. *hand of God.* This may be considered
 III. in two views. Our times are in the
 hand of God, as a supreme Disposer of
 events. They are in the hand of God
 as a Guardian and a Father.

Our times, I say, are in the hand of God as a supreme irresistible Ruler. All that is to happen to us in this and the succeeding years of our life,—if any succeeding years we shall be allowed to see,—has been foreknown and arranged by God. The first view, under which human affairs present themselves to us, is that of confused and irregular succession. The events of the world seem thrown together by chance, like the billows of the sea, tumbling and tossing over each other, without rule or order. All that is apparent to us is the fluctuation of human caprice, and the operation of human passions. We see the strife of ambition, and the efforts of stratagem, labouring to accomplish their several purposes among the societies of men. But
 it

it is no more than the surface, the out-
side of things, that we behold. Higher
counsels, than it is in our power to trace,
are concerned in the transactions of the
world. If we believe in God at all, as
the Governour of the universe, we must
believe that without his providence, no-
thing happens on earth. He over-rules,
at his pleasure, the passions of men. He
bends all their designs into subserviency
to his decree. *He makes the wrath of man
to praise him; and restrains, in what
measure he thinks fit, the remainder of
wrath.** He brings forth in their course
all the generations of men. When the
time is come for their entering into light,
they appear on the stage; and when the
time fixed for their dismissal arrives,
he changes their countenance, and sends
them away. The time of our appear-
ing is now come, after our ancestors had
left their place, and gone down to the
dust. We are at present permitted to act

S E R M.
III.

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our

* Psalm lxxvi. 10.

SERM. our part freely, and without constraint.

III.

No violence is done to our inclination or choice. But assuredly there is not a day of our life, nor an event in that day, but was foreseen by God. That succession of occurrences, which to us is full of obscurity and darkness, is all light and order in his view. He sees from the beginning to the end; and brings forward every thing that happens, in its due time and place.

Our times are altogether in his hand.

Let us take notice, that they are not in the hands either of our enemies, or of our friends. It is not in the power of man to shorten or to prolong our life, more or less than God has decreed. Enemies may employ craft or violence in their attacks; friends may employ skill and vigilance for the preservation of our health and safety; but both the one and the other can have effect only as far as God permits. They work in subserviency to his purpose. By him they are held in invisible bonds. To the exertions

tions of all human agents he says, *Hi-* S E R M.
therto shalt thou come, and no farther. III.

WE are to observe next, that *our times are in the hand of God*, not only as an almighty Disposer, but as a merciful Guardian and Father. We are by no means to imagine, that from race to race, and from year to year, God sports with the lives of succeeding generations of men, or in the mere wantonness of arbitrary power, brings them forth, and sends them away. No; if we have any confidence in what either the light of nature suggests to all men, or what the revelation of the gospel has confirmed to Christians, we have full ground to believe, that the administration of human affairs is conducted with infinite wisdom and goodness. The counsels of the Almighty are indeed too deep for our limited understandings to trace. *His path* may often, as to us, be *in the sea, and his footsteps in the mighty waters*; while, nevertheless, *all his paths are*


SERM. *mercy and truth.* He who, from the
 III. } benignity of his nature, erected this
 world for the abode of men; He who
 furnished it so richly for our accom-
 modation, and stored it with so much
 beauty for our entertainment; He who
 since first we entered into life, hath fol-
 lowed us with such a variety of mer-
 cies, surely can have no pleasure in our
 disappointment and distress. *He knows
 our frame: he remembers we are dust;*
 and looks to frail man, we are assured,
 with *such pity as a father beareth to his
 children.** To him we may safely com-
 mit ourselves, and all our concerns; as
 to one who is best qualified, both to di-
 rect the incidents proper to happen to
 us in this world, and to judge of the
 time when it is fit for us to be remov-
 ed from it.

EVEN that ignorance of our future
 destiny in life, of which we sometimes
 complain,

* Psalm ciii, 13, 14.

complain, is a signal proof of his good-^{SERM.}
ness. He hides from us the view of ^{III.} futurity, because the view would be dangerous and overpowering. It would either dispirit us with visions of terror, or intoxicate us by the disclosure of success. The veil which covers from our sight the events of this and of succeeding years, is a veil woven by the hand of mercy. *Our times are in his hand*; and we have reason to be glad that in his hand they are kept, shut out from our view. Submit to his pleasure as an almighty Ruler we must, because we cannot resist him. Equal reason there is for trusting in him as a Guardian under whose disposal we are safe.

SUCH is the import of the text, that *our times are in the hand of God*. Our times are unknown to us, and not under our own direction. They are in the hands of God as a Governor and Ruler; in the hands of God as a Guardian and Father. These separate views of the text require,

S E R M. require, on our part, separate improve-
 III.  ments.

SEEING our times are not in our own hand, seeing futurity is unknown to us, let us, first, check the vain curiosity of penetrating into what is to come. Conjecture about futurity we often must ; but upon all conjectures of what this year is to produce, let us lay a proper restraint. Let us wait till God shall bring forward events in their proper course, without wishing to discover what he has concealed ; lest, if the discovery were granted, we should see many things, which we would wish not to have seen.

The most common propensity of mankind is to store futurity with whatever is agreeable to them ; especially in those periods of life when imagination is lively, and hope is ardent. Looking forward to the year now beginning, they are ready to promise themselves much from the foundations of prosperity which they have laid ; from the friend-
 ships

ships and connections which they have secured; from the plans of conduct which they have formed. Alas! how deceitful do all these dreams of happiness often prove! While many are saying in secret to their hearts, *To-morrow shall be as this day and more abundantly,* we are obliged in return to say to them, *Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day might bring forth.*

I do not mean, that in the unknown prospect which lies before us, we should forebode to ourselves nothing but misfortunes.—May it be the pleasure of Heaven that this year run on in a placid and tranquil tenor to us all!—But this I say, that in such foresight of futurity as we are allowed to take, we may reckon upon it as certain, that this year shall prove to us, as many past have proved, a chequered scene of some comforts and some troubles. In what proportion one or other of these shall prevail in it; whether, when it ends, it shall leave with us the memory of joys or of sorrows, is to be determined by him
in

S E R M.
III.

SERM. in whose hands *our times are*. Our wisdom is, to be prepared for whatever the year is to bring; prepared to receive comforts with thankfulness, troubles with fortitude; and to improve both for the great purposes of virtue and eternal life.

ANOTHER important instruction which naturally arises from our times not being in our own hands is, that we ought no longer to trifle with what it is not in our power to prolong; but that we should make haste to live as wise men; not delaying till to-morrow what may be done to day; *doing now with all our might whatever our hand findeth to do*; before that *night cometh wherein no man work*.

Amidst the uncertainty of the events which are before us, there is one thing we have too much reason to believe, namely, that of us who are now assembled in this congregation, and who have seen the year begin, there are some who shall not survive to see it close. Whether it shall be you, or you, or I, who shall

shall be gathered to our fathers before S E R M.
the revolving year has finished its round, III.
God alone knows. *Our times are in his*
hand: But to our place, it is more than
probable that some of us shall have
gone. Could we foretel the month, or
the day, on which our change was to
happen, how diligent would we be in
setting our house in order, and preparing
ourselves to appear before our Maker?
Surely, that ought to be prepared for
with most care, concerning which we
are ignorant how soon it is to take place.
Let us therefore *walk circumspectly* and
redeem the time. Let us dismiss those tri-
vial and superfluous cares which burden
or corrupt our life, in order to attend to
what is of highest importance to us as
men and Christians. The beginning of
each year should carry to us all a solemn
admonition of our folly, in neglecting
to improve suitably the years that are
past. It should call up mispent time
into our view, and be like the hand
coming forth upon the wall, in the days
of

SERM. of Belshazzar, and writing in legible
 III. characters over against us, “ O man !
 “ thy days are numbered ; thou art
 “ weighed in the balance, and found
 “ wanting ; take care lest thy kingdom
 “ be on the point of departing from
 “ thee.”

WHEN we consider, in the next place, that our times, as I before illustrated, are in the hand of God as a sovereign Disposer, it is an obvious inference from this truth, that we should prepare ourselves to submit patiently to his pleasure, both as to the events which are to fill up our days, and as to the time of our continuing in this world. To contend with him we know to be fruitless. The word that is gone out of his mouth must stand. In the path which he has marked out for us, whether it be short or long, rugged or smooth, we must walk. Is it not then the dictate of wisdom, that we should previously reconcile ourselves to this sovereign ordination, and bring our minds to harmonize with what is appointed

pointed to be our destiny? Let us for-
tify this temper, by recalling that re-
flection of the wise man; *Who knoweth*
what is good for man in this life; all the
days of his vain life which he spendeth as
*a shadow?**

SERM.
III.

To enjoy long life, and see many days, is the universal wish; and, as the wish is prompted by nature, it cannot be in itself unlawful. At the same time, several circumstances concur to temper the eagerness of this wish; and to show us that it should always be formed under due submission to the wiser judgment of Heaven. Who among us can tell, whether, in wishing for the continuance of many years on earth, we may not be only wishing for a prolongation of distress and misery?—You might live, my friends, till you had undergone lingering rounds of severe pain, from which death would have proved a seasonable deliverance. You might live till your breasts were pierced with many a wound from public calamities or private sorrows.

You

* Ecclef. vi. 12.

S E R M. You might live till you beheld the death
 III. of all of whom you had loved; till you sur-
 vived all those who love you; till you
 were left as desolate strangers on earth,
 in the midst of a new race, who neither
 knew you, nor cared for you, but who
 wished you off the stage.—Of a nature so
 ambiguous are all the prospects which life
 sets before us, that in every wish we form,
 relating to them, much reason we have
 to be satisfied that our times are in the
 hands of God, rather than our own.

THIS consideration is greatly strength-
 ened when, in the last place, we think of
 God acting, not as a sovereign only, but
 as a Guardian, in the disposal of our
 times. This is our great consolation in
 looking forward to futurity. To God
 as a wise Ruler, calm submission is due;
 but it is more than submission that be-
 longs to him as a merciful Father; it is
 the spirit of cordial and affectionate con-
 sent to his will. Unknown to us as the
 times to come are, it should be sufficient
 to

to our full repose that they are known to God. The day and the hour which are fixed in his counsels for our dismissal from life, we ought to be persuaded are fixed for the best; and that any longer we should not wish to remain.

When we see that last hour drawing nigh, though our spirits may be composed on our own account, yet, on account of our friends and families, no little anxiety and sorrow may be sometimes apt to take possession of the mind. Long we have enjoyed the comfort of their society, and been accustomed to consider them as parts of ourselves. To be parted from them for ever is, at any rate, a bitter thought; but to the bitterness of this, is over and above added the apprehension of their suffering much by our death. We leave many a relation, perhaps may leave young children, and a helpless family, behind us, to be exposed to various dangers, and thrown forth on an unfriendly world. Such virtuous anxieties often oppress the tender and feeling heart at the closing periods
of

SE R M.
III.

SER M. of life.—My brethren, look up to that
 III. God, in whose hands *the times* of your
 fathers were ; in whose hand *the times*
 of your posterity shall be. Recollect,
 for you comfort, the experience of
 ages. When were the righteous utter-
 ly forsaken by God in times past? Why
 should they be forsaken by him in
 times to come? Well did he govern
 the world before you had a being in it :
 Well shall he continue to govern it af-
 ter you are no more. No cause have you,
 therefore, to oppress your minds with the
 load of unknown futurity. Commit your
 cares to a Father in heaven. Surrender
 your life, your friends, and your family,
 to that God, who hath said, *The children
 of his servants shall continue, and their seed
 shall be established before him**.—*Leave
 thy fatherless children, I will preserve them
 alive; and let thy widows trust in me†.*

I HAVE thus shown what the import
 is, and what the improvement should be,
 of

* Psalm cii. 28.

† Jeremiah xlix. 11.

of the doctrine of the text, that *our times* S E R M.
are in the hand of God. It asserts a fact, III.
the truth of which can be called in ques-
tion by none; a fact which, whether
persons have any sentiments of religion
or not, is calculated to make a serious im-
pression on every mind; especially at sea-
sons when the revolution of years gives
us warning that our duration on earth
is measured, and advances towards its
period. To persons who are religiously
disposed, who study to improve life to
its proper purposes, to do their duty
towards God and man, and through the
merits of their Redeemer to obtain grace
and favour from Heaven, the doctrine
of the text is still more important. A-
mong them it tends to awaken impres-
sions which are not only serious, but, as
I have shown, salutary and comforting
to the heart.—Thankful that our times
are in the hand of a Sovereign, who is
both wise and gracious, let us prepare
ourselves to meet the approaching events
of life with becoming resignation, and
at

SERM. at the same time with manly constancy
 and firm trust in God. As long as it
 shall please him to continue our abode
 in the world, let us remain faithful to
 our duty; and when it shall please him
 to give the command for our removal
 hence, let us utter only this voice: "In
 thy hand, O my God, *my times are.*
 Thou art calling me away. Here I
 am, ready to obey thy call, and at thy
 signal to go forth. I thank thee that
 I have been admitted to partake so
 long of the comforts of life, and to
 be a spectator of the wisdom and good-
 ness displayed in thy works. I thank
 thee that thou hast borne so long with
 my infirmities and provocations; hast
 allowed me to look up to thy promises
 in the gospel, and to hear the words
 of eternal life uttered by my great Re-
 deemer. With gratitude, faith, and
 hope, I commit my soul to thee. *Lord,*
now lettest thou thy servant depart in
peace; for mine eyes have seen thy sal-
vation." Such are the sentiments with
 which

which every pious and good man should ^{S E R M.}
conclude his life. Such indeed are the ^{III.}
sentiments which he ought to carry
through every part of life. With these
may we begin, and with these conclude,
every succeeding year which God shall
think fit to add to our earthly existence!

S E R M O N IV.

ON the Mixture of BAD MEN with the
GOOD in HUMAN SOCIETY.

MATTH. xiii. 30.

Let both grow together until the harvest.

SERM. IV. **T**HE parable, of which these words are a part, contains a prophetic description of the state of the church. Our Lord predicts that the societies of Christians were to be infected with persons of loose principles and bad dispositions, whom he likens to *tares* springing up among *wheat*. He intimates that there should arise some whose officious zeal

zeal would prompt the desire of exterminating immediately all such evil men; but that this were contrary to the designs of providence, and to the spirit of Christianity; that a complete separation was indeed to be made at last between the good and the bad; but that this separation was to be delayed till the end of the world, when, in the stile of the parable, the *tares* should be entirely gathered out from among the wheat. *Let both grow together until the harvest.*

S E R M.
IV.

When we look around us, nothing is more conspicuous in the state of the world, than that broad mixture of the religious and the impious, the virtuous and the wicked, which we find taking place in every society. Strong objections seem hence to arise against either the wisdom or goodness of divine Providence; especially when we behold bad men not only tolerated in the world, but occasionally exalted in their circumstances, to the depression of the just. Why,

it will be said, if a Supreme Being exist,

SERMON. and if his justice rule the universe, does
 IV. he allow such infamous persons as the records of history often present, to have a place, and even to make a figure in his world? Why sleeps the thunder idle in his hand, when it could so easily blast them? What shall we think of one who, having the power of exterminating them always at his command, permits them to proceed without disturbance; nay, sometimes appears to look on them with complacency?—It becomes highly worthy of our attention to consider what answer can be made to these objections; to inquire whether any reasons can be given that serve to justify this dispensation of Providence, in allowing a mixture of bad men to continue on the face of the earth until the end of time. This inquiry shall make the subject of the present discourse, together with such reflections as naturally arise from surveying the state of human affairs.

BUT, before entering directly on such inquiry,

inquiry, it may be proper to take notice, that, in our estimation of who are the good, who are the bad, we are often in hazard of committing mistakes. The real characters of men are known only to God. They frequently depend on the secret and unseen parts of life. As in judging of themselves men are always partial, so in judging of others they often err, through the imperfect information which they have gathered, or the rash prejudices which they have formed. They are too apt to limit the character of virtue to those who agree with them in sentiment and belief; and to exaggerate the failings of those against whom they have conceived dislike, into great and unpardonable crimes. Were it left to the indiscreet zeal of some to extirpate from the earth all those whom they consider as bad men, there is ground to apprehend that, instead of tares the wheat would often be rooted out. — At the same time, we readily admit the fact, as too manifest to be denied, that a multitude
of

§ E R M. of gross and notorious finners are now
 IV. mixed with the followers of God and
 virtue. Let us proceed then to consider
 how far this is consistent with the justice
 and wisdom of the Governour of the
 world.

IT is a principle in which all serious
 and reflecting persons have agreed, and
 which by many arguments is confirmed,
 that our present state on earth is designed
 to be a state of discipline and improve-
 ment, in order to fit human nature for a
 higher and better state which it is to at-
 tain hereafter. Now, this principle being
 once admitted, we say, that the mixture
 of virtue and vice which here prevails, is
 calculated to answer this purpose better
 than a more unmixed and perfect state
 of society would have done.

FOR, in the first place, the crimes of
 the wicked give occasion to the exercise
 of many excellent dispositions of heart
 among the righteous. They bring forth
 all

all the suffering virtues, which otherwise S E R M.
would have had no field; and by the IV.
exercise of which the human character is
tried, and acquires some of its chief
honours. Were there no bad men in the
world to vex and distress the good, the
good might appear in the light of harm-
less innocence; but could have no op-
portunity of displaying fidelity, magna-
nimity, patience, and fortitude. One half
of virtue, and not the least important
half, would be lost to the world. In
our present imperfect state, any virtue
which is never exercised is in hazard of
becoming extinct in the human breast.
If goodness constantly proceeded in a
smooth and flowery path; if, meeting
with no adversary to oppose it, it were
surrounded on every hand with acclama-
tion and praise, is there no ground to
dread that it might be corrupted by va-
nity, or might sink into indolence? This
dangerous calm must therefore be inter-
rupted. The waters must be troubled,
lest they should stagnate and putrify.

When

S E R M. When you behold wicked men multiplying in number, and increasing in power, imagine not that Providence particularly favours them. No; they are suffered for a time to prosper, that they may fulfil the high designs of heaven. They are employed as instruments in the hand of God for the improvement of his servants. They are the rods with which he chastens the virtuous, in order to rouse them from a dangerous slumber; to form them for the day of adversity, and to teach them how to suffer honourably.

In the next place, the mixture of the bad among the good serves not only to give exercise to the passive graces, but also to improve the active powers and virtues of man. It inures the righteous to vigilance and exertion. It obliges them to stand forth, and act their part with firmness and constancy in evil times. It gives occasion for their virtues to shine with conspicuous lustre; and makes them appear as *the lights of the world* amidst surrounding

surrounding darkness. Were it not for S E R M.
the dangers that arise from abounding IV.
iniquity, there would be no opportunity
for courage to act, for wisdom to admonish,
for caution to watch, nor for faith to exert
itself in *overcoming the world*. It is that
mixture of dispositions which now takes place,
that renders the theatre on which we act so
busy and stirring, and so much fitted for
giving employment to every part of man's
intelligent and moral nature. It affords a
complete field for the genuine display of
characters; and gives every man the oppor-
tunity to come forth and show what he is.
Were the tenor of human conduct altogether
regular and uniform, interrupted by no
follies and vices, no cross dispositions and
irregular passions, many of our active
powers would find no exercise. Perhaps
even our life would languish, and become
too still and insipid. Man is not yet ripe
for a paradise of innocence, and for the
enjoyment of a perfect and faultless
society. As in
the

SER. M. the natural world, he is not made for
 IV. perpetual spring and cloudless skies, but
 by the wintry storm must be called to exert his abilities for procuring shelter and defence; so in the moral world, the intermixture of bad men renders many an exertion necessary, which in a more perfect state of the world would find no place, but which in the present state of trial is proper and useful.—The existence of vice in the world assuredly testifies our present corruption; and according to the degree of its prevalence, is always, more or less, the source of misery. It is a standing proof of the fall and degeneracy of man. But as long as that fallen state continues, the wisdom of Providence eminently appears in making the errors and frailties of the wicked subservient to the improvement of the just. *Tares* are for that reason suffered at present to grow up *among the wheat*.

THESE observations on the wisdom of Providence in this dispensation will be
 farther

farther illustrated, by considering the S E R M.
useful instructions which we receive, or IV.
which at least every wise man may receive, from the follies and vices of those among whom we are obliged to live.

First, They furnish instruction concerning the snares and dangers against which we ought to be most on our guard. They put it thereby in our power to profit by the errors and misconduct of others. By observing from what small beginnings the greatest crimes have arisen; observing how bad company has seduced this man from his original principles and habits; how a careless indulgence of pleasure has blinded and intoxicated that man; how the neglect of divine institutions has, in another, gradually paved the way for open profligacy; much salutary instruction is conveyed to the virtuous. Tracing the dangerous and slippery paths by which so many have been insensibly betrayed into ruin, their views of human nature are enlarged; the sense of their own imbecility

S E R M. cility is strongly impressed upon them, accompanied with the conviction of the necessity of a constant dependence on the grace and assistance of heaven. All the crimes which they behold disturbing society around them, serve as signals hung out to them, beacons planted in their view, to prevent their making shipwreck among those rocks on which others have split. It has been justly said, that not only from the advices of his friends, but from the reproaches of his enemies, a wise man may draw instruction. In the same manner, it is not only by the examples of good men, but likewise by those of the wicked, that an attentive mind may be confirmed in virtue.

Next, THESE examples of bad men, while they admonish the virtuous of the dangers against which they are to guard, are farther profitable by the views which they exhibit of the evil and the deformity of sin. Its odious nature never appears in so strong a light as when displayed

played in the crimes of the wicked. It is S E R M.
true that, when vice is carried only to a IV.
certain degree, and disguised by plausible
colours, it may pass unreprieved, and
even for a while seem popular in the
world. But it is no less true that, when
it becomes open and flagrant, and is de-
prived of the shadow of virtue, it never
fails to incur general reprobation, and to
become the object either of contempt or
of hatred. How often, for instance, have
the greatest abilities, which once drew
esteem and admiration, sunk, in a short
time, into the most humiliating degrada-
tion, merely through the ascendant which
corrupted inclinations and low habits had
acquired over their possessor? How of-
ten have the rising honours of the young
been blasted, by their forsaking the path
of honour on which they had once enter-
ed, for the blind and crooked tracts of
depravity and folly? Such spectacles of
the infamy of vice, such memorials of
the disgrace attending it, are permitted
by Providence for general instruction;
and

S E R M. and assuredly are edifying to the world.

IV.

It was necessary, for moral improvement, that the beauty and excellence of virtue, and the deformity of vice, should be strongly impressed on every intelligent mind. This could never be done with so great advantage as by the striking contrasts of both which are produced by the living examples of evil men intermixed with the good. It is in this mirror that we clearly contemplate how much the *righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.*

THE same purpose of important instruction is farther promoted by the instances of misery which the state of wicked men on earth affords. I admit that the worldly success, which sometimes attends them, may blind and seduce the unwary; but a little more reflection enables men to distinguish between apparent success and real happiness. The condition of worthless men, whatever splendor riches may throw around them, is
easily

easily discerned to be a restless and miserable one; and the misery which they suffer, to be derived from their vices. In that great corrupted crowd which surrounds us, what incessant bustle and stir, what agitation and tumult take place? What envy and jealousy of one another? How much bitterness of resentment do we behold among them; mutually deceiving and deceived; supplanting and supplanted; ever pursuing, but never satisfied? These are not matters of rare observation, or which require nice scrutiny to discover them. We need only open our eyes to behold the wicked tormented by their passions, and far removed from that sanctuary of calmness and tranquillity which is the abode of real happiness. Nay, when we appeal to bad men themselves, after they have run the whole round of vicious pleasures, we will often find them obliged to confess, that the wretched result of their pursuits has been *vanity and vexation of spirit*; and that the happiest days they have enjoyed were in
the

SERMON. the times of innocence; before criminal
 IV. desires and guilty passions had taken possession of their breasts. Such practical demonstrations as these of the infelicity of sin are yielded by the examples of evil doers whom we see around us. By attending to their situation, the misery, as well as infamy of guilt is realised, and rendered sensible to our apprehension.

THUS, upon a fair inquiry, you behold how the ways of God may, in this remarkable case, be justified to man. You behold what important ends are advanced, by permitting *the tares* at present to grow together with the wheat. The intermixture of evil men in human society serves to exercise the suffering graces and virtues of the good; by the diversity of characters among those with whom they have intercourse, it serves to bring forth and improve their active powers and virtues, and to enlarge the circle of useful occupations; it serves to
 instruct

instruct them in the temptations against **S E R M.**
which they are to guard, to reveal to **IV.**
them all the deformity of vice, and to
make its miseries pass conspicuously be-
fore their eyes. When we consider them
as actors on the theatre of the world, they
are thereby improved in the part they
have to perform. When we consider
them as spectators of what is passing
on that theatre, their minds are thereby
instructed ; their views rectified and en-
larged by the objects that are set before
them.

FROM these important truths, several
reflections no less important arise.


We are naturally taught, in the first
place, never to be hasty in finding fault
with any of the arrangements of Provi-
dence. The present permission of moral
evil on the earth seemed, on the first
view, to furnish a strong objection against
either the wisdom or the goodness of
the Author of nature. After beholding
the useful purposes which are answered

S E R M. by that permission, how cautious should we be in advancing any of our rash speculations against his government and conduct! To our confined and humble station it belongs not to censure, but to submit, trust, and adore; satisfied that the farther we inquire, the rectitude of his ways will appear the more; thankful for the discoveries of them which have been imparted to us; and persuaded that, where our discoveries fail, it is not because there is no more wisdom or goodness to be seen, but because our present condition allows us not to see more.

IN the second place, let us be taught with what eye we are to look upon those bad men whom we find around us in the world. Not surely with an eye of envy. Whatever prosperity they may seem to enjoy, they are still no more than *tares*, the weeds of the field; contemptible in the sight of God; tolerated by his providence for a while on account of the righteous, to whose improvement they are rendered

rendered subservient. The parable in-
forms us that, in the end, they are to be SERM.
IV.
gathered together and burnt. In this life
only they have *their good things.* But
their prosperity is transitory. *They are
brought into desolation in a moment, and ut-
terly consumed with terrors. As a dream
when one awaketh, so, O God, when thou
awakest, thou shalt despise their image*.*—
When we consider their unhappy state, it
becomes us to behold them with the eye
of pity. Let us remember that, in the
midst of their errors, they are by nature
still our brethren. Let us not behave to
them in the spirit of bitterness. Insult
not their follies. Pride not yourselves
on superior virtue. Remember that, as
bad men are mixed with the good, so, in
the best men, vices are at present mixed
with virtues. Your own character, good
as you may esteem it, is not free from
every evil taint; and in the characters of
F 2 those

* Psalm. lxxiii. 19, 20.

S E R M. those whom you reprobate as vitious,
 IV.  there are always some good qualities mixed with the bad ones. Study, as far as you can, to reclaim and amend them ; and if, in any degree, you have been profited by their failings, endeavour, in return, to profit them, by good counsel and advice ; by advice, not administered with officious zeal, or self-conceited superiority, but with the tenderness of compassion and real friendship.

IN the third place, in whatever proportion the admixture of vice may seem to take place in the world, let us never despair of the prevalence of virtue on the whole. Let us not exaggerate, beyond measure the quantity of vice that is found in the mixture. It is proper to observe, that in the parable now before us, after the owner of the field had *sown his good seed*, no reason is given us to think, that the good seed was entirely choked up by *tares*. On the contrary, we are told that *the blade sprung up, and brought forth fruit* ;
 and,

and, though the *tares* also arose, yet, in S E R M.
the end there was a *harvest*, when the IV.
wheat was reaped and gathered into the
barn. In the most corrupted times, God
never leaves himself without many wit-
nesses on earth. He is always attentive
to the cause of goodness; and frequent-
ly supports and advances it by means
which we are unable to trace. He nou-
rishes much piety and virtue in hearts
that are unknown to us; and beholds re-
pentance ready to spring up among ma-
ny whom we consider as reprobates.—I
know that it has always been common
for persons to represent the age in which
they live as the worst that ever appeared;
and religion and virtue as just on the
point of vanishing from among men.
This is the language sometimes of the
serious; often of the hypocritical, or of
the narrow-minded. But true religion
gives no sanction to such severe censures,
or such gloomy views. Though the *tares*
must beat all times springing up, there is
no reason for believing that they shall
ever

SERM. ever overspread the whole field. The
 IV. nature of the weeds that spring up may vary, according to the nature of the soil. Different modes of iniquity may distinguish different ages of the world; while the sum of corruption is nearly the same. Let not our judgments of men, and of the times in which we live, be hasty and presumptuous. Let us trust in the grace of God; and hope the best of mankind,

IN the fourth and last place, let us keep our eyes ever fixed on that important period, which is alluded to in the text, as the conclusion of all. *Let both grow together until the harvest.* The great spiritual year is to be closed by a *harvest*, when *the householder is to gather the wheat into his barn*; when, at the end of the world, the final distinction of men and characters is to take place. The confused mixture of good and evil, which now prevails, is only a temporary dispensation of Providence, accommodated to man's fallen and imperfect state. Let it not tempt
 us

us for a moment to distrust the reality of the divine government; or to entertain the remotest suspicion that moral good and evil are to be on the same terms for ever. The frailties of our nature fitted us for no more at present than the enjoyment of a very mixed and imperfect society. But when our nature purified and refined, shall become ripe for higher advancement, then shall the spirits of the just, disengaged from any polluted mixture, undisturbed by sin or by sinners, be united in one divine assembly, and rejoice for ever in the presence of him who made them. Looking forward to this glorious issue with stedfast faith, let no crosses appearances ever discomfit our hopes, or lead us to suspect that we have been serving God in vain. If we continue *faithful to the death*, we may rest assured, that in due time we shall *receive the crown of life*.

S E R M.
IV.

S E R M O N V.

On the RELIEF which the GOSPEL
affords to the DISTRESSED.

Preached at the Celebration of the Sa-
crament of the Lord's Supper.

MATTH. xi. 28.

*Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are
heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

SERM. **T**HE life of man on earth is doom-
ed to be clouded with various
evils. Throughout all ranks, the
afflicted form a considerable proportion
of the human race; and even they
who have a title to be called prosper-
ous, are always, in some periods of
their life, obliged to drink from the
cup

cup of bitterness. The Christian religion is particularly entitled to our regard, by accommodating itself with great tenderness to this distressed condition of mankind. It is not to be considered as merely an authoritative system of precepts. Important precepts it indeed delivers for the wise and proper regulation of life. But the same voice which enjoins our duty, utters the words of consolation. The gospel deserves to be held a dispensation of relief to mankind under both the temporal and spiritual distresses of their state.

This amiable and compassionate spirit of our religion conspicuously appears in the character of its great Author. It shone in all his actions while he lived on earth. It breathed in all his discharges; and, in the words of the text, is expressed with much energy. In the preceding verse, he had given a high account of his own person and dignity. *All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the*

S E R M.
V.

SERM. *the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will*
 V. *reveal him.* But lest any of his hearers
 should be discouraged by this mysterious
 representation of his greatness, he in-
 stantly tempers it with the most graci-
 ous benignity; declaring, in the text,
 the merciful intention of his mission to
 the world, *Come unto me, all ye that la-
 bour and are heavy laden, and I will give
 you rest.*

THE first thing which claims our at-
 tention in these words is, what we are to
 understand by *coming unto Christ*. This
 is a phrase which has often given occa-
 sion to controversy. By theological writ-
 ers it has been involved in much need-
 less mystery, while the meaning is in it-
 self plain and easy. The very metaphor
 that is here used serves to explain it. In
 the ancient world, disciples flocked
 round their different teachers, and at-
 tended them wherever they went; in
 order both to testify their attachment,
 and to imbibe more fully the doctrine
 of their masters. *Coming unto Christ,*
 therefore,

therefore, is the same with resorting SERM.
to him as our declared Master; ac- V.
knowledging ourselves his disciples, be-
lievers in his doctrine, and followers of
his precepts. As Christ is made known
to us under the character both of a
Teacher and a Saviour, our *coming to*
him imports not only submission to his
instructions, but confidence also in his
power to save. It imports that, for-
saking the corruptions of sin and the
world, we follow that course of virtue
and obedience which he points out to
us; relying on his mediation for par-
don of our offences, and acceptance
with heaven. This is what is impli-
ed in the scripture term *Faith*; which
includes both the assent of the under-
standing to the truth of the Christian
religion, and the concurrence of the
will in receiving it.

WHAT next occurs in the text to
attract our notice, is the description of
those to whom the invitation is address-
ed. All those who *labour, and are*
heavy

SERM. *heavy laden*, that is, who, in one way
 V. or other, feel themselves grieved and
 distressed, are here invited to come to
 Christ—Now, from two sources
 chiefly our distresses arise; from mo-
 ral, or from natural causes.

First, THEY may arise from inward
 moral causes; from certain feelings and
 reflexions of the mind, which occasion
 uneasiness and pain. A course of sin
 and vice always proves ruinous and de-
 structive in the issue. But its tendency
 to ruin is often not perceived, while
 that tendency is advancing. For as
 sin is the reign of passion and pleasure,
 it forms men to a thoughtless inconfi-
 derate state. Circumstances, however,
 may occur, and frequently, in the
 course of life, do occur which disclose
 to a vicious man the ruin which he is
 bringing on himself, as an offender
 against the God who made him. When
 some occasional confinement to soli-
 tude, or some turn of adverse fortune,
 directs his attention immediately upon
 his

his own character; or when, drawing to-
wards the close of life, his passions sub-
side, his pleasures withdraw, and a fu-
ture state comes forward to his view;
in such situations it often happens,
that the past follies and crimes of such a
man appear to him in a light most odi-
ous and shocking; and not odious only,
but terrifying to his heart. He confi-
ders that he is undoubtedly placed un-
der the government of a just God, who
did not send him into this world for
nought; that he has neglected the part
assigned to him; has contemned the laws
of heaven; has degraded his own na-
ture; and instead of being useful, hav-
ing been hurtful and pernicious to those
among whom he lived, is about to
leave a detestable memory behind him.
—What account shall he give of him-
self to his maker? Self condemned,
polluted by so many crimes, how can
he expect to find mercy in his sight?—
Hence, an overwhelmed and dejected
mind; hence, dismal forebodings of
punishment; hence, that *wounded spi-*
rit,

S E R M.
V.

SERM. *rit.* which, when it is deeply pierced,
 V. becomes the forest of all human evils,
 and has sometimes rendered existence a
 burden which could not be endured.

Such distresses as these, arising from moral internal causes, may be made light of by the giddy and the vain; and represented as confined to a few persons only of distempered imagination. But to those whose professions give them occasion to see men under various circumstances of affliction, they are known to be far from being unfrequent in the world; and, on many more occasions than is commonly imagined, to throw over the human mind the blackest gloom of which it is susceptible. Religious feelings, be assured, have a deep root in the nature of man. They form a part of the human constitution. They are interwoven with many of those fears and hopes which actuate us in the changing situations of fortune. During the gay and active periods of life, they may be smothered; but with most men, they are smothered rather than totally obliterated:

And

And if any crisis of our condition shall awaken, and bring them forth, in their full force, upon a conscious guilty heart, woe to the man, who, in some disconsolate season, is doomed to suffer their extreme vengeance !

BUT, while under such distresses of the mind not a few may be said to *labour and to be heavy laden*, greater still is the multitude of those who, from natural external causes, from the calamities and evils of life, undergo much suffering and misery. The life of man is not indeed wholly composed of misery. It admits of many pleasing scenes. On the whole, there is reason to believe that it affords more joy than grief. At the same time, the unfortunate, as I before observed, form always a numerous class of mankind; and it may be said with truth, that *fore travel is ordained for the sons of men*. Though the burden is not equally laid on all; some there always are, on whom it falls with oppressive weight. Unexpected disappointments have crushed their hopes,

S E R M. hopes, and blasted the plans which they
 { V. had formed for comfort in the world.

The world had, perhaps, smiled upon them once, only to give them a sharper feeling of its miseries at the last. Struggling with poverty, unable to support their families whom they see languishing around them, they, at the same time, are obliged by their situation in society to conceal their necessities; and under the forced appearance of cheerfulness, to hide from the world a broken heart. They are stung, perhaps, by the unkindness of friends; cast off by those in whom they had trusted; or torn by untimely death from real friends, in connexion with whom they might have flourished and been happy; at the same time borne down, it may be, with the infirmities of a sickly body, and left to drag a painful life without assistance or relief.—How many sad scenes of this nature, on which it were painful to insist, does the world afford?

When

When we turn to those who are ac- SER M.
counted prosperous men, we shall always V.
find many sorrows mingled with their
pleasures? many hours of care and vexa-
tion, wherein they acknowledge them-
selves classed with those who *labour and*
are heavy laden. In entering into some
gay festive assembly, we behold affected
chearfulness displayed on every counte-
nance; and might fancy that we had ar-
rived at the temple of unmixed pleasure
and gladness of heart. Yet, even there,
could we look into the bosoms of these
apparently happy persons, how often
would we find them inwardly prey-
ed upon by some tormenting suspicions,
some anxious fears, some secret griefs,
which either they dare not disclose to
the world, or from which, if disclosed,
they can look for no relief?—In short,
amidst that great company of pilgrims,
who are journeying through life, many
there are whose journey lies through a

S E R M. valley is only cheered by transient glimpses of joy.

V.

To these classes of mankind is addressed the invitation of the text. To them, it is in a particular manner addressed; overlooking the giddy and dissipated multitude. *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden.* Not as if our Saviour were always ready to accept that sort of piety which is merely the consequence of distress; or made all those welcome, who are driven by nothing but fear or danger to have recourse to him. His words are to be understood as intimating, that the heart which is humbled and softened by affliction, is the object of his compassionate regard; that he will not reject us merely because we have been cast off by the world; but that, if with proper dispositions and sentiments we apply to him in the evil day, we shall be sure of meeting with a gracious reception. It now remains to show, what that reception is which we may look for; what that *rest* is which Christ hath

hath promised to confer on those who S E R M.
come to him; whether their distress arise V.
from moral or from natural causes.
Come unto me, and I will give you rest.

I. CHRIST affords rest to the disturbed mind that labours under apprehensions and fears of guilt. Let those who suffer distress of this nature *come to Christ*, that is, with contrition and repentance, have recourse to him as their Saviour; and they shall regain quietness and peace. Foolish and guilty they have been, and justly lie under dread of punishment; but the penitent sorrow which they now feel, implies their disposition to be changed. It implies, as far as it is genuine, that, sensible of their folly, they now desire to become good and wise; and are determined for the future to hold a virtuous course, could they only hope to obtain pardon for the past. In this situation of mind, let them not be cast down and despair. Christ has brought with him from heaven the olive branch.

SERM. He carries in his hand the signal of
 V. forgiveness. The declaration which he
 publisheth is, *Let the wicked forsake his
 way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
 and let him return to the Lord, and he
 will have mercy upon him; and to our
 God, for he will abundantly pardon**. In-
 sufficient though our own repentance
 be, to procure pardon from heaven, we
 are informed, that an all-sufficient atone-
 ment has been made by Christ. Neither
 the number nor the atrocity of offences
 excludes, from forgiveness, the penitent
 who returns to his duty. To all who
 come under this description, the offer of
 mercy extends, without exception. *He
 that spared not his own Son, but delivered
 him up for us all, how shall he not with
 him also freely give us all things †?*

This discovery of divine government,
 afforded by the Gospel, is perfectly cal-
 culated to scatter the gloom which had
 overcast

* Isaiah lv. 7.

† Rom. viii. 32.

overcast the desponding heart. The atmosphere clears up on every side; and is illuminated by cheering rays of celestial mercy. Not only is hope given to the penitent, but it is rendered sinful not to indulge that hope. We are not only allowed and encouraged, but we are commanded to trust in the divine clemency. We are commanded to believe that *none who come unto Christ he will in any wise cast out**. As I live, saith the Lord God, *I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel†?*—Such is the relief which the religion of Christ brings to them who labour and are heavy laden under the impressions of guilt and divine displeasure; a relief which nothing can render ineffectual to the heart, except the most gloomy superstition, founded on gross misconceptions

* John vi, 37.

† Ezek, xxxiii. 11.

S E R M. tions of the nature and attributes of God,

V.
Let us now,

II. Consider what *rest* the religion of Christ gives to them whose distress arises not from inward and moral, but from natural and external causes; from adverse fortune, or any of those numerous calamities to which we are at present exposed. To such persons, it may seem more difficult to promise any effectual relief. In the former case, the distress lay entirely in the mind. As soon as its views are rectified, and its apprehensions quieted, the evil is removed, and the cure effected. Here, the distress arises from without; and the religion of Christ affects not the course of external events. But though it removes not all the evils of life, though it promises no continuance of undisturbed prosperity, (which indeed it were not salutary for man always to enjoy) yet, if it mitigates the evils which necessarily belong to our state, and supports us under them, it may justly be said

said to give *rest* to *them who labour and* S E R M.
are heavy laden. When much that is V.
material and important is effected, we
have no cause to complain, though all
that we desire be not accomplished.—In
this part of the discourse, I am to be con-
sidered as addressing myself not merely to
such as are at present suffering any severe
calamity. I now speak to many, who,
in the midst of health and affluence, en-
joy the various comforts of life. But I
must desire such persons to look forward
to what may one day be their state. Let
them reflect how important it is to pre-
pare themselves for the future unknown
vicissitudes of the world. For, *if a man*
live many years, and rejoice in them all, yet
let him remember the days of darkness, for
*they shall be many**.—Now, either in the
prospect of future distress, or under pre-
sent suffering, I say, that the religion of
Christ gives *rest* to the heart, by the for-
titude

* Eccles. xi. 9.

S E R M. titude which it inspires, and by the con-
 V.
 solations which it affords.

First, IT inspires fortitude. It discovers a supreme administration, so friendly to the interests of goodness, as never to allow the followers of Christ to dread, that, in any situation of fortune, they shall be neglected by Heaven. From the abstract consideration of the divine perfections, men had always some ground to believe, that the general order of the universe was consulted by its great Ruler, But how far the interest of individuals might be obliged to yield, or, in many cases might be sacrificed, to this general order, they were left altogether in the dark. Here the gospel of Christ comes to our aid, by the explicit assurance which it gives, that, in the great system of Providence, the welfare of every single good man is particularly included. *All things*, we are expressly told, are made to *work together*, not merely for the order and perfection of the whole, but also *for good to them*

*them who love God**. The life of every person, who comes under this description, forms a system complete within itself; where every event that happens to him possesses its destined place, and forms a link in that great chain of causes, which was appointed, from the beginning of things, for carrying on his improvement and felicity. Such an arrangement of the affairs of the world, may appear astonishing to our narrow capacities: yet surely implies no effort beyond the reach of infinite power, joined with infinite wisdom and goodness.

Hence arises a degree of fortitude and constancy to good men, which can upon no other grounds be attained. Faith, in these principles of the gospel, erects for them a fortress, impregnable to the assaults of the world, into which they can at all times retreat. Sitting under the shelter of divine protection, they calmly
hear

* Rom. viii. 28.

S E R M. hear the storm, when it blows with its
 V. utmost violence around them. *The floods
 have lifted up their voice; they have lifted
 up all their waves. But the Lord on high
 is mightier than the noise of many waters;
 yea, than the mighty waves of the sea*.*
 Of the man who possesses such principles,
 it is justly said, *His heart is established; he
 shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart
 is fixed, trusting in the Lord†.* Tran-
 quillity, order, and magnanimity, dwell
 with him; while all is confusion and
 trepidation among those, who have
 nothing to look to but the apparent dis-
 orders of the world.

THE doctrine of Christ not only arms
 us, in this manner, with fortitude against
 the approach of evil; but, supposing evils
 to fall upon us with their heaviest pres-
 sure, it lightens the load by many con-
 solations to which others are strangers.
 While bad men trace, in the calamities
 with

* Pſal. xciii. 34.

† Pſal. cxii. 7, 8.

with which they are visited, the hand of ^{S E R M.}
an offended sovereign, Christians are ^{V.}
taught to view them as the well-intend-
ed chastisements of a merciful Father.
They hear amidst them, that still voice
which a good conscience brings to their
ear ; *Fear not, for I am with thee; be not
dismayed, for I am thy God**. They ap-
ply to themselves the comfortable pro-
mises with which the gospel abounds,
They discover in these the happy issue
decreed to their troubles ; and wait with
patience till Providence shall have ac-
complished its great and good designs.
In the mean time, devotion opens to
them its blessed and holy sanctuary :
That sanctuary in which the wound-
ed heart is healed, and the weary mind
is at rest ; where the cares of the world
are forgotten, where its tumults are
hushed, and its miseries disappear ; where
greater objects open to our view than
what

* Isaiah xli. 10.

S E R M. what the world presents ; where a more
 V. serene sky shines, and a sweeter and
 calmer light beams on the afflicted heart. In those moments of devotion, a pious man, pouring out his wants and sorrows to an almighty Supporter, feels that he is not left solitary and forsaken in a vale of woe. God is with him ; Christ and the Holy Ghost are with him ; and, though he should be bereaved of every earthly friend, he can look up in heaven to a Friend who will never die.

To these present consolations, the religion of Christ adds the joyful prospect of that future state, where eternal *rest remaineth for the people of God*. This life they are taught to consider as only the *house of their pilgrimage* ; the temporary mansion of painful though necessary discipline. But let them endure for a little, and the pilgrimage shall end, the discipline shall be finished ; and all the virtuous be assembled in those blissful regions which are prepared for their reward. Such a prospect cheers the dark-
 est

est hours of life; and affords a remedy S E R M.
to every trouble. *The sufferings of this* V.
present time are not worthy to be compared
with the glory which shall be revealed.*
They appear in this comparative view,
as no more than a distressing dream of
the night, from which one awakes into
heath, and light, and joy.—Peculiar is
this high consolation to the religion of
Christ. It is what all nations had eager-
ly wished for; what all philosophy had
anxiously sought to discover; but what
no research, no philosophy were able to
ascertain to mankind, till Christ brought
the assurance of life and immortality
from heaven; and conferred on his dis-
ciples this noble and inestimable gift.

THUS, on the whole, the Christian
doctrine is found to be the great Medi-
cine of life. It is the balm of human sor-
rows and cares. In our present state,
where so many are suffering actual dis-
tress,

* Rom. viii. 18.

S E R M. trefs, of one kind or other, and where
 V. all have reason to dread the approach
 of distress, it is religion only that can
 alleviate the burdens of life, and smooth
 our passage through this evil world.
 —Let this view of religion persuade
 us to improve the sacred ordinance of
 our Lord's supper for *coming unto Christ*,
 in the way before explained: that is,
 joining ourselves to him as his disciples;
 his disciples, not in words and profes-
 sions only, but in heart, and in truth;
taking upon us his yoke, as is added in
 the words immediately following the
 text; *and learning of him who is meek and
 lowly in heart*. Let those who labour
 under the sense of remembered follies
 and crimes, *come unto Christ* with peni-
 tent dispositions, and they shall obtain
 pardon. Let those who labour under
 the suffering of present, or the appre-
 hension of future sorrows, *come unto
 Christ*, and they shall receive consolati-
 on. All who are in any sense *heavy laden*,
 coming unto him, shall find *rest* to their
 souls.

BEFORE

BEFORE concluding this discourse, S E R M.
there is another set of men, not yet ^{V.}
mentioned, to whom I must also ad-
dress the exhortation in the text: those
I mean, who labouring under none of
the distressful burdens of life, are sur-
feited with its pleasures; who labour
under the burden only of languid ease,
and the load of insipid prosperity.
You drag, my friends, but a miserable
existence. Oppressed by no sorrow, you
feel vacuity and dissatisfaction within;
you are often weary of life; and in your
solitary hours, are disposed to confess that
all you have experienced is vanity.
Wherefore should you any longer *spend*
your money for that which is not bread, and
your labour for that which satisfieth not?
Come to the waters which are now offered
to you, and drink. Hear, and your souls
shall live. Retreat from the corrupting
vanities of the world, to Christ, to reli-
gion, and to virtue. New sources of en-
joyment shall then be opened to you. A
world yet untried shall display itself to
your view. You shall be formed to a re-
lish

SERM. V. lish for the quiet and innocent pleasures of piety and devotion; of friendship, and good affections; of useful knowledge, and virtuous activity; of calm society, and seasonable retirement; pleasures of which at present you have no conception; but which, upon trial, you shall find superior to the trifling, or turbulent amusements, in which you have hitherto passed your days.—The true satisfaction of the human mind is only to be found in religion and goodness; in a purified heart, and a virtuous life. All other plans of happiness are fallacious, and pregnant with disappointment. It is only by *acquainting ourselves with God* that we can *find peace*: And those who are *weary and heavy laden* now, shall be *weary and heavy laden* to the end, unless they come to him who only can *give them rest*.

SERMON

S E R M O N VI.

ON LUXURY and LICENTIOUSNESS.

ISAIAH v. 12.

The harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe and wine are in their feasts; but they regard not the work of the Lord neither consider the operation of his hands.

IT appears from many passages in the S E R M.
writings of this prophet, that in his VI.
days great corruption of manners had
begun to take place among the people
of Israel. Originally a sober and a re-
ligious nation, accustomed to a simple
and pastoral life, after they had en-
larged their territories by conquest,
VOL. IV. H and

SERM. and acquired wealth by commerce,
 VI. they gradually contracted habits of
 luxury; and luxury soon introduced
 its usual train of attending evils. In
 the history of all nations, the same
 circulation of manners has been found;
 and the age in which we live resem-
 bles, in this respect, the ages which
 have gone before it. Forms of iniquity
 may vary; but the corrupt propensities
 of men remain at all times much the
 same; and revolutions from primitive
 simplicity to the refinements of criminal
 luxury have been often exhibited on the
 stage of the world. The reproof direct-
 ed in the text to the Jews of that an-
 cient age, will be found equally appli-
 cable to the manners of many, in mo-
 dern times. In discoursing from it, I
 shall first consider the character of those
 who are described in the text, and show
 the guilt that is involved in it. I shall
 next consider the duties which persons
 of that character are supposed to have
 neglected;

neglected; to regard the work of the Lord, and to consider the operation of his bands.

S E R M.
VI.

I. WHEN we take into view the character pointed at in the text, it is evident that what the prophet means to reprove is, the spirit of inconsiderate dissipation, of intemperate indulgence, and irreligious luxury. It is not *the feast and the wine, the harp and the viol*, which he means to condemn. Music and wine are, in themselves, things of innocent nature: Nay, when temperately enjoyed, they may be employed for useful purposes; for affording relaxation from the oppressive cares of life, and for promoting friendly intercourse among men. The opulent are not prohibited from enjoying the good things of this world, which providence has bestowed upon them. Religion neither abolishes the distinction of ranks, (as the vain philosophy of some would teach us to do), nor interferes with a modest and decent indulgence of pleasure.—It is the

SERMON VI. criminal abuse of pleasure, which is here censured; that though ~~it~~ ^{it} be a moderate and temperate enjoyment of it which wholly absorbs the time and attention of men; which ~~obliterates~~ ^{obliterates} every serious thought of the proper business of life; and effaces the sense of religion and of God.

It may be proper to remark, that it is not open and direct impiety, which is laid to the charge of the persons here characterised. It is not said, that in their feasts they scoffed at religion, or blasphemed the name of God. To this summit of wickedness these persons had not yet arrived; perhaps, the age in which they lived gave not its countenance to this wantonness of impiety. It is merely a negative crime of which they are accused; that they *regarded not the work of the Lord, neither considered the operation of his hands.* But this absence of all religious impressions is here pointed out, as sufficient to stigmatise their characters with guilt. As soon as the sense of a Supreme Being is lost, the great check is taken off

off which keeps under restraint the pas-
sions of men. Mean desires, and low
pleasures, take place of the greater and
nobler sentiments which reason and re-
ligion inspire. Amidst the tumult of *the*
wine and the feast, all proper views of hu-
man life are forgotten. The duties
which as men, they have to perform,
the part they have to act in the world,
and the distresses to which they are ex-
posing themselves, are banished from
their thoughts. *To-morrow shall be as*
this day, and more abundantly, is the only
voice. Inflamed by society, and circula-
ted from one loose companion to ano-
ther, the spirit of riot grows and swells,
till it end in brutal excess.

Were such disorders rare and occasi-
onal merely, they might perhaps be for-
gotten and forgiven. But, nourished by
repetition and habit, they grow up
among too many, to become the busi-
ness and occupation of life. By these
unfortunate votaries of pleasure, they
are accounted essential to happiness.
Life appears to stagnate without them;

Having

SERM. VI. Having no resource within themselves, their spirits sink, and their very being seems annihilated, till the return of their favourite pleasures awaken within them some transient sparkles of joy. —Idleness, ease, and prosperity, have too natural a tendency to generate the follies and vices now described. *Because they have no changes, said the Psalmist, therefore they fear not God**. They are the dark and solitary hours of life, which recal men to recollection and wisdom. They show to the unthinking what this world really is, and what may be expected from it. But the day that is always bright and unclouded, is not made for men. It flatters them with the dangerous illusion, that it is in their power to render life one scene of pleasure; and that they have no other business on earth, but to spread the *feast*, and call *the harp and the viol* to sound. But the examples
are

* Psalm iv. 19.

are so frequent, of the dangers and the SERM.
crimes which arise from an intemperate VI.
abuse of pleasure, that on this part of
the subject it seems needless to insist
any longer. I proceed therefore,

II. To consider the duties which men are accused of having neglected; and which, it is here supposed, if duly attended to, would have acted as the correctives of dissolute and irreligious luxury; these are, to *regard the work of the Lord*, and to *consider the operation of his bands*.—By recommending such duties, I do not mean to represent it as requisite that the feast should be turned into an act of worship, that the countenances of men should be always grave; or that, in the hours of amusement and of social festivity, no subject may employ their thoughts and their discourse, except God and a future state. All extremes in religion are dangerous; and, by carrying austerity too far, we are in hazard of only promoting hypocrisy. But though
some,

S E R M. some, in the last age, might be prone to
 VI. this extreme; yet, at the present day,
 there is not much occasion for warn-
 ing men against it. — What I now in-
 sist upon is, that all our pleasures ought
 to be tempered with a serious sense of
 God; that scenes of gaiety and enjoy-
 ment should never make us forget that
 we are subjects of his government, and
 have a part allotted us to act in his
 world; that on no occasion they should
 be prolonged so much, repeated so often,
 or suffered to transport us so far, as to
 lead us to break any of the divine laws, or
 to act inconsistently with the character
 of men and Christians. A prevailing
 sense of God on the mind is to be ever
 held the surest guard of innocence and
 virtue, amidst the allurements of plea-
 sure. It is the salutary mixture which
 must be infused into the cup of joy, in
 order to render it safe and innoxious.

This sense of God should lead us, in
 the language of the prophet, to *regard*
the work of the Lord, and to *consider the*
operation

operation of his hands; which expressions may be understood as requiring us to have God upon our thoughts under two views; *to regard his work*, as the Author of nature; and *to consider the operation of his hands*, as the Governor of the world. Let us attend more particularly to each of these views of the Supreme Being.

SERM.
VI.

IN the first place, we are to view God as the Author of nature, *or to regard the work of the Lord*. With his works we are in every place surrounded. We can cast our eyes no where, without discerning the hand of Him who formed them, if the grossness of our minds will only allow us to behold him.—Let giddy and thoughtless men turn aside a little from the haunts of riot. Let them stand still, and contemplate the wondrous works of God; and make trial of the effect which such contemplation would produce.—It were good for them that, even independently of the Author, they were more acquainted with his works;
good

SERM. good for them, that from the societies
 VI. of loose and dissolute men, they would
 retreat to the scenes of nature; would
 oftener dwell among them, and enjoy
 their beauties. This would form them
 to the relish of uncorrupted, innocent
 pleasures; and make them feel the value
 of calm enjoyments, as superior to the
 noise and turbulence of licentious
 gaiety. From the harmony of nature,
 and of nature's works, they would learn
 to hear sweeter sounds than what arise
 from the *viol, the tabret, and the pipe.*

But to higher and more serious
 thoughts these works of nature give
 occasion, when considered in conjunc-
 tion with the Creator who made them.
 —Let me call on you, my friends, to
 catch some interval of reflection, some
 serious moment, for looking with
 thoughtful eye on the world around
 you. Lift your view to that immense
 arch of heaven which encompasses
 you above. Behold the sun in all his
 splendor rolling over your head by day;
 and the moon, by night, in mild and
 serene

ference majesty, surrounded with that S E R M.
host of stars which present to your ima- VI.
gination an innumerable multitude of
worlds. Listen to the awful voice of
thunder. Listen to the roar of the tem-
pest and the ocean. Survey the wonders
that fill the earth which you inhabit.
Contemplate a steady and powerful
Hand, bringing round spring and sum-
mer, autumn and winter, in regular
course; decorating this earth with in-
numerable beauties, diversifying it with
innumerable inhabitants; pouring forth
comforts on all that live; and, at the
same time, overawing the nations with
the violence of the elements, when it
pleases the Creator to let them forth.
After you have viewed yourselves as sur-
rounded with such a scene of wonders;
after you have beheld on every hand,
such an astonishing display of majesty
united with wisdom and goodness; are
you not seized with solemn and serious
awe? Is there not something which
whispers you within, that to this
great Creator reverence and homage
are

SERM. are due by all the rational beings whom
 VI. he has made? Admitted to be spectators
 of his works, placed in the midst of so
 many great and interesting objects, can
 you believe that you were brought hi-
 ther for no purpose; but to immerse
 yourselves in gross and brutal, or, at
 best, in trifling pleasures; lost to all
 sense of the wonders you behold; lost
 to all reverence of that God who gave
 you being, and who has erected this
 amazing fabric of nature, on which you
 look only with stupid and unmeaning
 eyes?—No: Let the scenes which you
 behold prompt correspondent feelings.
 Let them awaken you from the degrad-
 ing intoxication of licentiousness, into
 nobler emotions. Every object which
 you view in nature, whether great or
 small, serves to instruct you. The star
 and the insect, the fiery meteor and the
 flower of spring, the verdant field and
 the lofty mountain, all exhibit a Su-
 preme Power, before which you ought
 to tremble and adore; all preach the
 doctrine, all inspire the spirit, of devoti-
 on,

on, and reverence. *Regarding, then, SERM. VI.*
the work of the Lord, let rising emoti-
ons of awe and gratitude call forth from
your souls such sentiments as these:—
“ Lord, wherever I am, and whatever
“ I enjoy, may I never forget thee as
“ the Author of nature! May I never
“ forget that I am thy creature and
“ thy subject! In this magnificent tem-
“ ple of the universe, where thou hast
“ placed me, may I ever be thy faithful
“ worshipper; and may the reverence
“ and the fear of God be the first senti-
“ ments of my heart!”—It is to such
considerations of God I would now re-
call your thoughts, from the *wine and*
the feast, as proper to check the spirit
of levity and folly; and to inspire man-
ly and becoming sentiments, in the
place of criminal dissipation. But,

In the *second* place, there is a conside-
ration of a nature still more serious, to be
employed for the same purpose; the con-
sideration of God as not only the Author
of nature, but the governor of his crea-
tures.

SERM. tures. While we regard the work of the
 VI. Lord, we are also to consider the never
 ceasing operation of his hands. We are
 to look up to an awful and irresistible
 Providence, stretching its arm over our
 heads; directing the fate of men, and
 dispensing at its pleasure happiness or
 misery. In the giddy moments of jol-
 lity, the wanton and thoughtless are
 apt to say: "*Let us eat and drink, for*
 "*to-morrow we die.* Nothing is bet-
 "*ter for man, than to rejoice as much*
 "*as he can all the days of his vain life;*
 "*and to keep himself undisturbed by*
 "*superstitious terrors. He who sit-*
 "*teth in the heavens bestows no mi-*
 "*nute attention on the sons of earth.*
 "*He permits all things to come alike to*
 "*all; one event to happen to the righte-*
 "*ous and to the wicked.*"—Be assured,
 my brethren, it is not so. You great-
 ly deceive yourselves, by imagining that
 your Creator and Governor is indiffe-
 rent to the part you are now acting;
 or that the distribution of good and
 evil, which now takes place, has no
 relation

relation to your moral conduct. **IN SERM**
some instances, that relation may not **VI.**
be apparent, because the moral govern-
ment of God is not completed in this
world. But a multitude of proofs show
government to be already begun; and
point out to you the train in which you
may expect it to proceed.

In the history of all ages and nations,
you cannot but have observed a thousand
instances, *in which the operations of the
divine hand* has been displayed; over-
taking evil doers sooner or later with
punishment, and bringing on their own
heads the ruin they had devised for
others. You are not to imagine that
this displeasure of Providence is exerted
only against the ambitious, the treache-
rous, and the cruel, who are the authors
of extensive misery to the world. Un-
der this idea, perhaps, you may be de-
sireous to shelter yourselves, that your
excesses are of a harmless kind; that you
seek nothing more than the enjoyment
of your own pleasures; that your *feast*
and your *wine* interfere not with the
order

SERM. order of the world; and that therefore
 VI. you have done nothing which should
 awaken the sleeping thunder, and bring
 it down from heaven on your heads.
 Though not stained with the blackest
 colours of guilt, your conduct may ne-
 vertheless be highly offensive to the
 Ruler of the world. His government
 is not of that indolent inattentive kind,
 which allows impunity to every lesser
 criminal. He beholds with displeasure
 the behaviour of those who degrade
 their nature by vitious disorders; and
 contaminate, by their example, every
 society with which they are connected.
 His measures are taken, that in one way
 or other, they shall suffer.

Look around the circle of your
 acquaintance, and observe, whether
 they are not the sober, the industri-
 ous, and the virtuous, who visibly
 prosper in the world, and rise into
 reputation and influence; observe
 whether the licentious and intempe-
 rate are not constantly humbled and
 checked

checked by some dark reverse either in ^{E. R. M.} their health or their fortune; whether ^{Vt.} the irreligious and profligate are ever suffered to escape long, without being marked with infamy, and becoming objects of contempt.—I ask, to what cause this is to be ascribed, but to that *operation of the hand of God*, which I am now calling you to consider? Does it not obviously carry the marks of a plan, a system of things, contrived and fore-ordained by Providence, for rewarding virtue, and punishing vice in every form of its disorders?—The Governor of the world need not for this purpose step from his throne, or put forth his hand from the clouds. With admirable wisdom he hath so ordered the train of human affairs, that, in their natural course, *men's own wickedness shall reprove them, and their backslidings correct them; that they shall be made to eat the fruit of their doings, and to fall into the pit which themselves had digged.*

S E R M.

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These things have been always so apparent to observation, that though a man may have been seduced into irregular and evil courses during his life, yet, at the close of it, it seldom happens but he discerns their pernicious nature, and condemns himself for them. Never, perhaps, was there a father, who, after he had spent his days in idleness, dissipation, and luxury, did not, when dying, admonish the children whom he loved, to hold a more honourable course, to follow the paths of virtue, to fear God, and to fulfil properly the duties of their station.—To yourselves, indeed, I can confidently appeal, whether what I am now saying, be not confirmed by your own testimony. After you have been guilty of some criminal acts, in the course of those riotous pleasures which you indulge, have you not, at certain times, felt the stings of remorse? Were you not obliged to confess to yourselves that a sad prospect of misery was opening before you, if such excesses were to continue? Did you not hear

hear an inward voice upbraiding you for having sunk and degraded your character so far below that of many of your equals around you?—My friends, what was this but the voice of God, speaking, as the Governor of his creatures, within your heart; testifying loudly that your course of life was displeasing to him; and warning you of punishments that were to follow? If his displeasure against you is already begun to be testified, can you tell where it is to stop, or how long it may continue to pursue you throughout future stages of your existence? *Who knoweth the power of his wrath?*—To this awful, this warning voice, will you not be persuaded reverently to listen? Impressed by the dread authority which it carries, shall you not fall down on your knees before your Maker, imploring his mercy to pardon your past offences, and his grace to rectify your future way?

S E R M.
VI.

SUCH ought to be the effects of the consideration of God as the Governor of

S E R M. the world. It leads to thoughts of a very serious nature. When we regard the work of the Lord, and contemplate him as the Author of the universe, such contemplation prompts devotion. But when we consider the operation of his hands in providence, and contemplate him as the Governor of mankind, such contemplation prompts humiliation before him for offences committed. The former addresses itself to the ingenuous sentiments that are left in the heart; and awakens a sense of our unworthiness, in neglecting the Author of nature, amidst our riotous pleasures. The latter addresses itself to our regard for safety and happiness; and awakens fear and dread, from consciousness of the guilt we have contracted. Hence springs up in every thoughtful mind, an anxious concern to avert the displeasure, and regain the favour of that Supreme Being to whom we are all subject. This, among unenlightened nations, gave rise to sacrifices, expiations, and all the rites of humble, though superstitious worship. Among nations,

nations, who have been instructed in true religion, sentiments of the same nature pave the way for prayer, repentance, faith, and all those duties, by means of which we may hope, through a divine Mediator and intercessor, to be reconciled to heaven. Natural and revealed religion here appear in concord. We behold the original dictates of the human heart laying a foundation for the glad reception of the comfortable tidings of the gospel.

I HAVE thus endeavoured to shew in what manner, by *regarding the work of the Lord, and considering the operation of his hands*, we may prevent the dangers arising from a thoughtless indulgence of pleasure; we may be furnished with an antidote to the poison which is too often mixed in that intoxicating cup. Human life is full of troubles. We are all tempted to alleviate them as much as we can, by freely enjoying the pleasurable moments which Providence thinks fit to allow

S E R M. low us. Enjoy them we may: But, if
VI. we would enjoy them safely, and enjoy
them long, let us temper them with the
fear of God. As soon as this is forgotten
and obliterated, the sound of *the harp*
and *the viol* is changed into the signal of
death. The serpent comes forth from
the roses where it had lain in ambush,
and gives the fatal sting. Pleasure in
moderation is the cordial, in excess it is
the bane, of life,

S E R M O N VII.

On the PRESENCE of GOD in a Future
State.

PSALM xvi. 11.

*Thou wilt shew me the path of life: In thy
presence is fulness of joy: at thy right
hand there are pleasures for evermore.*

THE apostle Peter, in a discourse S E R M.
which he held to the Jews, ap- VII.
plies this passage, in a mystical and pro-
phetical sense, to the Messiah*. But, in
its literal and primitive meaning, it ex-
presses the exalted hopes by which the
Psalmist

* Acts ij. 25.—28.

S E R M. Psalmist David supported himself amidst
 VII. the changes and revolutions, of which
 his life was full. By these hopes, when
 flying before Saul, when driven from his
 throne, and persecuted by an unnatural
 son, he was enabled to preserve his vir-
 tue, and to maintain unshaken trust in
 God.—In that early age of the world,
 those explicit discoveries of a state of im-
 mortality, which we enjoy, had not yet
 been given to mankind. But though
 the *Sun of righteousness* was not arisen,
 the dawn had appeared of that glorious
 day which he was to introduce. Even in
 those antient times, holy men, as the
 apostle writes to the Hebrews, *saw the
 promises afar off, and were persuaded of
 them and embraced them; and confessing
 that they were strangers and pilgrims on
 earth, declared that they sought after a
 better country, that is an heavenly**. In-
 deed, in every age, God permitted such
 hopes to afford support and consolation
 to those who served him. The full
 effect

* Heb. xi. 13,—16.

effect of them we behold in those tri-
umphant expressions of the text, which
are to be the subject of this discourse.
They lead us to consider; first, The
hope of the Psalmist in his present state;
Thou wilt shew me the path of life. And,
secondly, the termination of his hope in
that future state, where *in the presence of
God is fulness of joy, and at his right-hand
there are pleasures for evermore.*

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I. *Thou wilt shew me the paths of life.*
This plainly imports that there are dif-
ferent *paths* or courses of conduct, which
may be pursued by men in this world;
a path which leads to life or happiness,
and a path which issues in death or de-
struction. These opposite lines of con-
duct are determined by the choice which
men make of virtue or of vice; and hence
men are divided into two great classes,
according as their inclinations lead them
to good or to evil. *The path of life* is of-
ten a rough and difficult path, followed
only

S E R M. only by a few. The opposite one is the
 VII. broad way, in which the multitude
 walk; seemingly smooth, and strewed
 with flowers; but leading in the end to
 death and misery. *The path of life* con-
 ducts us up a steep ascent. The palace
 of virtue has, in all ages, been represent-
 ed as placed on the summit of a hill; in
 the ascent of which labour is requisite,
 and difficulties are to be surmounted;
 and where a conductor is needed, to di-
 rect our way, and to aid our steps.

Now, the hope which good men en-
 tertain is that this *path of life* shall be
 shewn them by God; that, when their
 intentions are upright, God will both in-
 struct them concerning the road which
 leads to true happiness, and will assist
 them to pursue it successfully. Among
 nations where any suitable ideas of God
 or of virtue began to be formed, hopes
 of this nature also began to be entertain-
 ed. It was consonant to the nature of
 man, to think that the Supreme Being
 was favourable to virtue. Accordingly,
 in

in the writings of some of the ancient philosophers, we find various obscure traces of this belief, that there was a benign heavenly spirit, who illuminated the minds of the virtuous, and assisted their endeavours to obtain wisdom and happiness. They even asserted, that no man became great or good without some inspiration of heaven.

But what they indistinctly conceived, and could not with confidence rely upon, the doctrine of Christianity hath clearly explained and fully confirmed; expressly and frequently teaching, that not only by the external discoveries of revelation, but by the inward operations of his Spirit, he *shews* to the humble and virtuous the *path of life*. While, by his word, he instructs them in their duty, by the influence of his grace he assists them in the performance of it. In all revelation there is certainly no doctrine more comfortable than this. It is to good men a noble and pleasing thought, that they are pursuing a path which God has discovered

S E R M.
VII.

S E R M. covered and pointed out to them. For
 VII. they know that every path, in which he
 is their conductor, must be honourable,
 must be safe, must bring them in the end
 to felicity. They follow that *Shepherd
 of Israel*, who always leads his flock into
*green pastures, and makes them lie down be-
 side the still waters.* At the same time,
 they know that, if there be truth in re-
 ligion at all, on this principle they may
 securely rest, that the Divine Being will
 never desert those who are endeavouring
 to follow out, as they can, the path
 which he has shewn them. He beholds
 them here in a state of great imbecility;
 surrounded with much darkness; expos-
 ed to numberless dangers, from the
 temptations that assault them without,
 and the seduction of misguided and
 disorderly passions within. In this si-
 tuation, can they ever suspect that the
 Father of mercies will leave his servants,
 alone and unbefriended, to struggle up
 the hill of virtue, without stretching
 forth a compassionate arm to aid their
 frailty, and to guide them through the
 bewildering

bewildering paths of life? Where were S E R M
 then the *God of love*? Where, those infi- VIL.
 nite compassions of his nature, in which
 all his worshippers have been encourag-
 ed to trust?—No: He will *send forth his*
light and his truth to bring them to his holy
hill. For the *righteous Lord loveth right-*
eousness, and his countenance beholdeth the
upright. With him there is no oblique
 purpose, to turn him aside from favouring
 the cause of goodness. No undertaking
 to which he has given his countenance
 shall prove abortive. No promise that he
 has made shall be allowed to fail. Whom
 he loveth, he loveth to the end. *The*
secret of the Lord is with them that fear
him, and he will shew them his covenant:
The meek will he guide in judgment, and
them will he teach his way. His grace
 shall be sufficient for them, and his strength
 be made perfect in their weakness. *They*
go from strength to strength; every one of
them appeareth before God in Zion.*—
 Such are the hopes with which good-
 men

* Psa. xxv. 14, 9. 2 Cor. xii. 9. Psa. lxxxiv. 7.

S E R M. men in a present life set forth on a course
 VII. of piety and virtue. *Thou wilt shew me*
the path of life. Let us now proceed,

II. To consider the termination of these hopes in a future state. *In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.* All happiness assuredly dwells with God. The *fountain of life* is justly said to be *with him.* That supreme and independent Being must necessarily possess within himself every principle of beatitude; and no cause from without can possibly affect his untroubled felicity. Among created dependent beings, happiness flows in scattered and feeble streams; streams that are often tinged with the blackness of misery. But from before the throne of God issues the river of life, full, unmixed, and pure; and the pleasures which now in scanty portions we are permitted to taste, are all derived from that source. Whatever gladdens
 the

the hearts of men or angels, with any S E R M. real and satisfactory joy, comes from VII. heaven. It is a portion of the *pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty; a ray issuing from the brightness of the everlasting life.* It is manifest, therefore, that every approach to God must be an approach to felicity. The enjoyment of his immediate presence must be the consummation of felicity; and it is to this presence that the Psalmist here expresses his hope that the *path of life* was to conduct him.

The whole of what is implied in arriving at the presence of the Divinity, we cannot expect to comprehend. Such expressions as these of scripture, *beholding the face of God; being made glad with the light of his countenance, and satisfied with his likeness; seeing light in his light; seeing no longer darkly as through a glass, but face to face; seeing him as he is;* are expressions altogether mysterious, conveying sublime though obscure ideas of the most perfect happiness and highest exaltation of human nature. This we know,

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know, that the absence of God, the distance at which we are now placed from any communication with our Creator, is one great source of our infelicity. Faith exerts its endeavours, but often ineffectually, to raise our souls to him. He is a *God that hideth himself*. His ways seem intricate and perplexed. We frequently cannot reconcile them to the conceptions which we had formed of his nature; and with many a suspicion and doubt they perplex the inquiring mind. His works we survey with astonishment, We wonder and adore. But while we clearly trace the footsteps of their great Author, his presence we can never discern. *We go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but we cannot perceive him; on the left hand, where he worketh, but we cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that we cannot see him**. Hence amidst the various sorrows and discouragements of the present state, that exclamation

* Job xxiii. 8, 9.

mation of Job's is often drawn forth SERM:
from the pious heart, *O that I knew* VII.
where I might find him, that I might
come even to his seat!*

Surrounded by such distressing obscurity, no hope more transporting can be opened to a good man, than that a period is to come, when he shall be allowed to draw nearer to the Author of his existence, and to enjoy the sense of his presence. In order to convey some faint idea of that future bliss, by such an image as we can now employ, let the image be taken from the most glorious representative of the supreme Being, with which we are acquainted in this world, the Sun in the heavens. As that resplendent luminary cheers and revives the universe, when, after the darkness of a tempestuous night, it comes forth in the morning with its brightest lustre, and inspires every heart with gladness; as ascending gradually through the heavens, it converts that

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whole

* Job. xxiii. 3.

SERM. whole vast extent, over which its beams
 VII. are diffused, into a region of light; and
 thus changes entirely the state of ob-
 jects, by arraying all nature in beauty,
 and transforming it into the image of
 its own brightness:—Some such change
 as this, though in a degree infinitely
 superior, we may conceive the revelati-
 on of the Divine Presence to produce
 upon the human soul. *I will behold
 thy face in righteousness; I shall be sa-
 tisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.*—
 But without endeavouring farther to
 unfold mysteries which we cannot ex-
 plore, there are two sublime and ex-
 pressive views of the Divine Essence
 given us in scripture, on which it may
 be edifying that our thoughts should
 rest for a little, in order to aid our con-
 ceptions of the blessedness of good men
 hereafter, in the presence of God. It
 is said, *God is light**; *God is love†*.
 Let us consider what *fulnes of joy*
 must

* 1 John i. 5.

† 1 John iv. 8.

must arise from such manifestations SERM.
of the Divine Essence to the blessed. VII.

God is light. The revelation of his presence, infers of course, a complete diffusion of light and knowledge among all who partake of that presence. This unquestionably forms a primary ingredient of happiness. Ignorance, or the want of light, is the source of all our present misconduct, and all our misfortunes. The heart of man is dark; and in the darkness of his heart is the seat of his corruption. He is unable to discern what is truly good. Perpetually employed in search of happiness, he is perpetually misled by false appearances of it. The errors of his understanding impose upon his passions; and, in consequence of the wrong direction which his passions take, he is betrayed into a thousand disorders. Hence sensuality, covetousness, and all the violent contests with others about trifles, which occasion so much misery, and so many crimes in the world. *He feedeth of*

SERM. *ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him*
 VII. *aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor*
say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?—*

Once open to him the perfect sources of knowledge and truth; suppose him placed in the presence of that God who is *Light*; suppose him illuminated by light derived immediately from the Supreme Being; presently all his former errors would fly away as mists are dispelled by the rising sun. His whole nature would be changed and reformed. The prejudices which obscured his understanding would be removed. The seductions of his passions would disappear. Rectitude and virtue, having nothing now to obstruct their entrance, would take entire possession of his heart. Angels are happier than men, because they enjoy more enlarged knowledge and views; because they labour under none of our unhappy deceptions; but see the truth as it is in itself; see it, as it is in God.

* Isaiah xliv. 20.

God. Sharing the same light which il- ^{S E R M.}
luminates them, good men in a future ^{VII.}
state will share in their felicity.

Moreover, the light that flows from the presence of Him who is the original source of light, not only banishes miseries which were the effects of former darkness, but also confers the most exquisite enjoyment. The knowledge afforded us at present serves to supply our most pressing wants; but it does no more. It is always imperfect and unsatisfactory; nay, much pain and anxiety it often leaves. Narrow is the sphere within which the mind can see at all; and even there it can see only *darkly as through a glass*. But when it shall be enlarged beyond this dusky territory, let loose from this earthly prison, and in *God's light* permitted to *see light*, the most magnificent and glorious spectacles must open to the view of the purified spirit. What must it be to behold the whole stupendous scene of nature unveiled, and its hidden mysteries disclosed! To trace the wise and just go-
vernment

SERM. ^{VII.} vernment of the Almighty, through all those intricacies which had so long perplexed us! To behold his hand conducting ten thousand worlds, which are now unknown to us; and throughout all the regions of boundless space, to view wisdom and goodness perpetually acting, and diversifying its operations in forms of endless variety! Well may such discoveries inspire that song of the blessed, which the apostle John heard *as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluiah! For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints**! As God is Light, so also it is said in scripture,

God is love. His presence must of course diffuse love, among all who are permitted to dwell in it. He that loveth

* Rev. xix. 6 xv. 3.

loveth not, knoweth not God. He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.* WERE man a single, solitary being, the full enjoyment of light might suffice for his happiness; as the perfection of knowledge would rectify and improve to the highest all his faculties. But, both here and hereafter, he is connected with other beings. Heaven implies a society; and the felicity of that society is constituted by the perfection of love and goodness, flowing from the presence of the God of love.

Hence follows the entire purification of human nature from all those malevolent passions, which have so long rendered our abode on earth the abode of misery. We greatly deceive ourselves, when we charge our chief distresses merely to the account of our external condition in the world. From the disadvantages attending it, I admit, that we may often have been exposed

to

* 1 John iv. 8, 16

SERM. to suffer. We may have met with dis-
 VII. appointments in our pursuits. By the
 arrows of misfortune we may have
 been wounded. Under infirmities of
 body we may have languished. But on
 this we may depend, that the worst evils
 of our present condition arise from the
 want of goodness and love; from the
 disorders of selfish passions; from the
 irritation which these occasion when
 working within ourselves, and the dis-
 tress which they produce when break-
 ing out upon us from others; in a
 word, from that corrupted state of tem-
 per, and that reciprocation of jealousies,
 suspicions, and injuries, which is ever
 taking place among the societies of men.
 Could you banish distrust, craft, and
 uncharitableness, from the earth, and
 form all mankind into an assembly of
 the just and the benevolent; could you
 inspire every heart with kind affections,
 and render every one friendly and gene-
 rous to his neighbour; you would ba-
 nish at once the most afflictive tribe of
 human evils. Seldom would the voice of
 complaint

complaint be heard. All nature would S E R M.
 assume a different aspect. Cheerfulness VII.
 would be seen on every countenance. Paradise would return. The wilderness would smile; *the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose.*—Now such are the effects which the presence of the God of love must produce on the inhabitants above. *Beholding his glory, they are changed into the same image.* In that temple of eternal love, which his presence has hallowed and consecrated, no sound but the voice of harmony is ever heard; no appearances ever present themselves but those of peace and joy.

THUS, considering God under these two illustrious characters which are given of him in scripture, as *Light*, and as *Love*, it follows that in his presence there must be *fulnes of joy*. But I am far from saying that the few imperfect hints I have now given, exhaust, or even approach to, the sum of those *pleasures for evermore which are at God's right hand*. Ten thousand pleasures
 are

SERM. are there, which now we have neither
 VII. faculties to comprehend, nor powers
 to enjoy. Behind that mysterious cloud,
 which covers the habitation of eternity,
 the view of mortals cannot penetrate.
 Content with our humble and distant
 situation, we must as yet remain. Faith
 can only look to those glories from afar.
 In patient silence, it must wait, trust,
 and adore.

Supposing the ideas which I have set
 before you, in this discourse, to be no
 more than the speculations of a contem-
 plative mind, such as were wont of old
 to be indulged by the philosophers of the
 Platonic school, still they would deserve
 attention, on account of their tendency
 to purify and elevate the mind. But
 when they are considered in connection
 with a revelation, which, upon grounds
 the most unquestionable, we believe to
 be divine, they are entitled to com-
 mand, not attention only, but reverence
 and faith.—They present to us such
 high expectations as are sufficient to
 determine every reasonable man to the
 choice

choice of virtue; to support him un-
der all its present discouragements, and
to comfort him in the hour of death.

SERM.
VII.

Justly may they excite in our hearts
that ardent aspiration of the Psalmist:

*My soul thirsteth for God, for the living
God; O when shall I come and appear
before him!*—But, with this wish in our

hearts, never, I beseech you; let us for-
get what was set forth in the first part
of this discourse; that, in order to ar-
rive at the presence of God, the *path of
life* must previously be shewn to us by
him, and that in this path we must
persevere to the end. These two

things cannot be disjoined, a virtuous
life and a happy eternity. *Who shall
ascend unto the hill of the Lord? and
who shall stand in his holy place? He
only who hath clean hands and a pure
heart.* Between a corrupted heart and

the God of light and love, there never
can be any connection. But of this
we may rest assured, that the path of pi-
ety and virtue, pursued with a firm and
constant

S E R M. constant spirit, will, in the end, through
VII. the merits of our blessed-Redeemer,
bring us to that presence, where *is ful-
ness of joy, and where are pleasures for
evermore.*

SERMON

S E R M O N VIII.

On CURIOSITY concerning the AFFAIRS of others.

JOHN XXI. 21, 22.

Peter seeing him, saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.

THESE words occurred in a conference which our Lord held with Simon Peter, after his resurrection from the dead. Conscious of the disgrace which he had incurred by his late denial of his Master, Peter must at this time have appeared before him with shame. Our Lord, after a tacit rebuke,

S E R M.
VIII.

SERM. buke, implied in the question which
 VIII. he repeatedly puts to him, *Simon son of
 Jonas, lovest thou me?* restores him, with
 great benignity, to his office as an apo-
 stle, by giving the commandment to
feed his sheep; and intimates also that it
 should be his lot to suffer death in the
 cause of his Master. The apostle John,
 distinguished here by the denomination
of the disciple whom Jesus loved, being
 present at this conversation, Peter, who
 was always eager and forward, looking
 to John, puts this question to our Savi-
 our, *Lord, and what shall this man do?*
 “What shall be his employment? what
 “his rank and station in thy kingdom?
 “what his future fate in life?—By
 what principle Peter was moved to put
 this unseasonable and improper questi-
 on to his Master; whether it arose from
 mere curiosity, or from some emotion
 of rivalry and jealousy, does not ap-
 pear; but it is plain that our Lord was
 dissatisfied with the enquiry which he
 made; and presently he checks Peter’s
 curiosity, by a severe reply; *What
 is*

is that to thee? “What is it to thee SERM.
“ what *this man shall do*; what shall be VIII.
“ his rank; or what the circumstances
“ of his life or his death? Attend thou
“ to thine own duty. Mind thy proper
“ concerns. Fulfil the part which I
“ have allotted to thee. *Follow thou*
“ *me.*”—The instruction which arises
from this conversation of our Lord’s
with Peter, is, That all prying inquiries
into the state, circumstances, or charac-
ter of others, are reprehensible and im-
proper; that to every man a particular
charge is assigned by his Lord and Mas-
ter, the fulfillment of which ought to be
the primary object of his attention,
without officiously thrusting himself in-
to the concerns of others. The illustra-
tion of these points shall make the sub-
ject of the present discourse.

THAT idle curiosity, that inquisitive
and meddling spirit, which leads men to
pry into the affairs of their neighbours,
is reprehensible on three accounts. It
interrupts the good order, and breaks
the

S E R M. the peace of society. It brings forward
 VIII. and nourishes several bad passions. It
 draws men aside from a proper attention to the discharge of their own duty.

IT interrupts, I say, the order, and breaks the peace of society. In this world we are linked together by many ties. We are bound by duty, and we are prompted by interest, to give mutual assistance, and to perform friendly offices to each other. But those friendly offices are performed to most advantage, when we avoid to interfere unnecessarily in the concerns of our neighbour. Every man has his own part to act, has his own interest to consult, has affairs of his own to manage, which his neighbour has no call to scrutinize. Human life then proceeds in its most natural and orderly train, when every one keeps within the bounds of his proper province; when, as long as his pursuits are fair and lawful, he is allowed, without disturbance, to conduct them in his own way. *That ye study to be quiet, and*
 to

*to do your own business**, is the apostoli-
cal rule, and indeed the great rule, for
preservation of harmony and order. But
so it is, that, in every age, a set of men
have existed, who, driven by an unhappy
activity of spirit, oftener perhaps than
by any settled design of doing ill, or any
motives of ambition or interest, love to
intermeddle where they have no con-
cern, to inquire into the private affairs
of others, and from the imperfect infor-
mation which they collect, to form
conclusions concerning their circum-
stances and character. These are they
who, in scripture, are characterised as
*tattlers, and busy bodies in other mens mat-
ters*, and from whom we are called to
turn away.

Though persons of this description
should be prompted by nothing but vain
curiosity, they are, nevertheless, danger-
ous troublers of the world. While
they conceive themselves to be inoffen-
sive, they are sowing dissension and
feuds.

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L

feuds.

* 1 Theff. iv. 11.

SERM.
VIII.

SERM. feuds. Crossing the lines in which
 VIII. others move, they create confusion,
 and awaken resentment. For every man conceives himself to be injured, when he finds another intruding into his affairs, and, without any title, taking upon him to examine his conduct. Being improperly and unnecessarily disturbed, he claims the right of disturbing in his turn those who wantonly have troubled him. Hence, many a friendship has been broken; the peace of many a family has been overthrown; and much bitter and lasting discord has been propagated through society.

WHILE this spirit of meddling curiosity injures so considerably the peace and good order of the world, it also nourishes, among individuals who are addicted to it, a multitude of bad passions. Its most frequent source is mere idleness, which, in itself a vice, never fails to engender many vices more. The mind of man cannot be long without some food to nourish the activity

tivity of its thoughts. The idle, who have no nourishment of this sort within themselves, feed their thoughts with inquiries into the conduct of their neighbours. The inquisitive and curious are always talkative. What they learn, or fancy themselves to have learned, concerning others, they are generally in haste to divulge. A tale which the malicious have invented, and the credulous have propagated; a rumour which, arising among the multitude, and transmitted by one to another, has, in every step of its progress, gained fresh additions, becomes in the end the foundation of confident assertion, and of rash and severe judgment.

It is often by a spirit of jealousy and rivalry, that the researches of such persons are prompted. They wish to discover something that will bring down their neighbour's character, circumstances, or reputation, to the level of their own; or that will flatter them with an opinion of their own superiority. A secret malignity lies at the bottom of their inquiries. It may be

S E R M. ~~concealed~~ by an affected show of candour and impartiality. It may even be veiled with the appearance of a friendly concern for the interests of others, and with affected apologies for their failings. But the hidden rancour is easily discovered.—While, therefore, persons of this description trouble the peace of society, they at the same time poison their own minds with malignant passions. Their disposition is entirely the reverse of that amiable spirit of charity, on which our religion lays so great a stress. *Charity covereth the multitude of sins*; but this prying and meddling spirit seeks to discover and divulge them. *Charity thinketh no evil*; but this temper inclines us always to suspect the worst. *Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity*; this temper triumphs in the discovery of errors and failings. Charity, like the sun, brightens every object on which it shines; a censorious disposition casts every character into the darkest shade it will bear.

It is to be farther observed; that all SERMON
VIII. impertinent curiosity about the affairs of others tends greatly to obstruct personal reformation; as it draws mens thoughts aside from what ought to be the chief object of attention, the improvement of their own heart and life. They who are so officiously occupied about their neighbours, have little leisure, and less inclination, to observe their own defects, or to mind their own duty. From their inquisitive researches; they find, or imagine they find, in the behaviour of others, an apology for their own failings; And the favourite result of their inquiries generally is, to rest satisfied with themselves. They are at least as good, they think, as others around them. The condemnation which they pass on the vices of their neighbours, they interpret to be a sentiment of virtue in themselves. They become those hypocrites described by our Lord, who see clearly *the mote that is in their neighbour's eye, while they discern not the beam that is in their own.*

IN

SERM. IN opposition to such a character as
 VIII. this, the doctrine plainly inculcated by
 the text is, that to every man a parti-
 cular charge is given by his Lord and
 Master, a part is assigned him by Pro-
 vidence to act; that to this he ought to
 bend his chief attention; and, instead
 of scrutinising the character or state of
 others, ought to think of himself, and
 leave them to stand or fall by their own
 master. *What shall this man do?* said
 Peter. *What,* replies our Lord, *is that*
to thee? Follow thou me.

WHERE persons possess any impor-
 tant station, or distinguished rank, in
 the world, the application of this doc-
 trine to them is manifest. If they have
 any candour, they cannot refuse to ac-
 knowledge that God and the world
 have a title to expect from them a di-
 ligent attention to their proper part in
 life; and that to waste their time in idle
 inquiries about others, with whom they
 have nothing to do, is reprehensible and
 sinful. But there are multitudes of
 mankind, to whom this appears in a very
 different

different light. They are humble and private men, who are willing to conceive themselves as of little importance in the world. Having no extensive influence, and no call, as they think, to distinguish themselves by active exertions in any sphere, they imagine that they may innocently lead an idle life, and indulge their curiosity, by canvassing at pleasure the character and the behaviour of those around them. With persons of this description every society too much abounds.—My brethren, no one ought to consider himself as insignificant in the sight of God.

In our several stations we are all sent forth to be labourers in God's vineyard. Every man has his work allotted, his talent committed to him; by the due improvement of which he might, in one way or other, serve God, promote virtue, and be useful in the world. *Occupy till I come*, is the charge given to all Christians without exception. To be entirely unemployed and idle is the prerogative of no one, in any rank of life.

Even

SERM.
VIII.

SERMON. VIII. Even that sex, whose task is not to mingle in the labours of public and active business, have their own part assigned them to act. In the quiet of domestic shade, there are a variety of virtues to be exercised, and of important duties to be discharged. Much depends on them for the maintenance of private economy and order, for the education of the young, and for the relief and comfort of those whose functions engage them in the toils of the world. Even where no such female duties occur to be performed, the care of preparing for future usefulness, and of attaining such accomplishments as procure just esteem, is laudable. In such duties and cares, how far better is time employed, than in that search into private concerns, that circulation of rumours, those discussions of the conduct, and descants on the character of others, which engross conversation so much, and which end, for the most part, in severity of censure!

In whatever condition we are placed, to act always in character should be our constant

constant rule. He who acts in character is above contempt, though his station be low. He who acts out of character is despicable, though his station be ever so high. *What is that to thee, what this man or that man does? Think of what thou oughtest to do thyself; of what is suitable to thy character and place; of what the world has a title to expect from thee. Every excursion of vain curiosity about others, is a subtraction from that time and thought which was due to ourselves and due to God. Having gifts, says the Apostle Paul, differing according to the grace that is given us, whether ministry let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation. He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness*.*

In the great circle of human affairs there is room for every one to be busy
and

* Rom. xii. 6,—9.

SERM.
VIII. and well employed in his own province,
without encroaching upon that of others.

It is the province of superiors to direct; of inferiors, to obey; of the learned to be instructive; of the ignorant, to be docile; of the old to be communicative; of the young to be adviseable and diligent. Art thou poor? Show thyself active and industrious, peaceable and contented. Art thou wealthy? Show thyself beneficent and charitable, condescending and humane. If thou livest much in the world, it is thy duty to make the light of a good example shine conspicuously before others. If thou livest private and retired, it is thy business to improve thine own mind, and to add, if thou canst do no more, one faithful subject to the Messiah's kingdom. There is indeed no man so sequestered from active life, but within his own narrow sphere he may find some opportunities of doing good; of cultivating friendship, promoting peace, and discharging many of these lesser offices of humanity and kindness, which are within the reach of every one,
and

and which we all owe to one another. SERM. VII^K
In all the various relations which subsist among us in life, as husband and wife, master and servants, parents and children, relations and friends, rulers and subjects, innumerable duties stand ready to be performed; innumerable calls to virtuous activity present themselves on every hand, sufficient to fill up with advantage and honour the whole time of man.

THERE is, in particular, one great and comprehensive object of attention, which, in the text, is placed in direct opposition to that idle curiosity reprehended by our Lord; that is, to follow Christ. *Follow thou me.* What this man or that man does; how he employs his time; what use he makes of his talents; how he succeeds in the world; are matters, concerning which the information we receive can never be of great importance to us; often, is of no importance at all. But how our Saviour behaved while he was on earth,

SERM. earth, or how, in our situation, he
 VIII. would have behaved, are matters of the
 highest moment to every Christian.

The commandment given in the text; to *follow him*, includes, both observance of his words, and imitation of his example. The words of Christ contain, as we all know, the standing rule of our life. His example exhibits the great model on which our conduct ought to be formed; and it is to this that the precept here delivered directly refers. — Examples have great influence on all. But by all human examples, we are in danger of being occasionally misled. We are ever obliged to be on our guard, lest the admiration of what is estimable, betray us into a resemblance of what is blemished and faulty. For the most perfect human characters, in the midst of their brightness and beauty, are always marked with some of those dark spots which stain the nature of man: But our Lord possessed all the virtues of the greatest and best men, without partaking any of their defects. In him, all
 was

was light without a shade, and beauty S E R M.
without a stain.—At the same time, his VIII.

example is attended with this singular advantage, of being more accommodated than any other to general imitation.

It was distinguished by no unnatural austerities, no affected singularities; but exhibits the plain and simple tenor of all those virtues for which we have most frequent occasion in ordinary life. In order to render it of more essential benefit, our Lord fixed his residence in no particular place; he tied himself down to no particular calling or way of living; but gives us the opportunity of viewing his behaviour, in that variety of lights which equally and indifferently regard all mankind. His life was divided between the retired and the active state. Devotion and business equally shared it. In the discharge of that high office with which he was vested, we behold the perfect model of a public character; and we behold the most beautiful example of private life, when we contemplate him among his disciples,

S E R M. disciples, as a Father in the midst of his
 VIII. family.—By such means he has exhibited before us specimens of every kind of virtue; and to all ranks and classes of men has afforded a pattern after which they may copy. Hardly is there any emergency which can occur in life, but from some incident in our Saviour's conduct, from some feature displayed in his character, we are enable to say to ourselves, "Thus Christ would have spoken, thus he would have acted, thus he would have suffered, if he had been circumstanced as we are now."

Instead, therefore, of thinking of thy neighbours around thee, and of inquiring how they behave, keep Christ in thine eye, and in thy whole conduct follow him. *Follow him* in his steady and conscientious discharge of duty, amidst opposition from evil men, and a corrupted world. Follow him in his patient submission to his Father's will, and the calmness of his spirit under all trials. Follow him in his acts of disinterested benevolence, in his com-
 passion

passion to the unhappy, in his readiness to oblige, to assist, and to relieve. Imitate the mildness and gentleness of his manners. Imitate the affability and condescension which appeared in his behaviour. Imitate the uncorrupted simplicity and purity which distinguished his whole life.

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THESE are much worthier and nobler objects of your attention, than any of those trifling varieties which you can explore and discover in the characters of those among whom you live. By lifting your view to so high a standard, you will be preserved from descending to those futile and corrupting employments of thought, which occupy the idle, the vain, and the malignant. It is incredible, how much time and attention are thrown away by men, in examining the affairs of others, and discussing their conduct. Were their time and attention thrown away only, the evil would, in some degree, be less. But they are worse than thrown away; they are not merely fruitless, but productive
of

SERM. of much mischief. Such a habit of
 VIII. thought is connected with a thousand
 vices. It is the constant source of rash
 and severe censure. It arises from envy
 and jealousy. It fomented ill nature and
 pride. It propagates misunderstanding
 and discord. All those evils would
 be prevented, if the reproof which our
 Lord administers in the text came oftener
 home, with proper authority, to the
 reflexion of men: *What is that to thee?*
 Each of us have more material and im-
 portant business of our own to fulfil.
 Our task is assigned; our part allotted.
 Did we suitably examine how that
 part was performed, we should be less
 disposed to busy ourselves about the
 concerns of others. We would dis-
 cover many a disorder to be correct-
 ed at home; many a weed to be pull-
 ed out from our own grounds; much
 remaining to be done, in order to ren-
 der ourselves useful in this world, and
 fit for a world to come.—Where-
 fore, instead of being critics on others,
 let us employ our criticism on
 ourselves.

ourselves. Leaving others to be judged **SERM.**
by Him who searcheth the heart, let us **VIII**
implore his assistance for enabling us to
act well our own part, and to follow
Christ.

S E R M O N IX.

On our Present IGNORANCE of the WAYS
of GOD.

JOHN xiii. 7.

Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

S E R M.
IX.

THESSE words of our Lord were occasioned by a circumstance in his behaviour which appeared mysterious to his disciples. When about to celebrate his last passover, he meant to give them an instructive lesson of condescension and humility. The mode which he chose for delivering

delivering this instruction, was the emblematical action of washing their feet. SERM.
IX.

When Simon Peter saw his Master addressing himself to the performance of so menial an office, he exclaims with the greatest surprise, *Lord, dost thou wash my feet?* Our Lord replies, in the words of the text, *What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.* “ My behaviour in this instance, may seem unaccountable to you at present; but you shall afterwards receive a satisfactory explication of the intent of that symbol which I now employ.”

The expressions of a divine person, on this occasion, can very naturally and properly be applied to various instances, where the conduct of Providence, in the administration of human affairs, remains dark and mysterious to us. *What I do, thou knowest not now.* We must for a while be kept in ignorance of the designs of heaven. But this ignorance, though necessary at present, is not always to continue. A time shall come

S E R M. when a commentary shall be afforded on
 IX. all that is now obscure ; when the veil of
 mystery shall be removed ; and full satisfaction be given to every rational mind. *Thou shalt know hereafter.* This is the doctrine which I purpose to illustrate in the following discourse.

I. OUR Saviour's words lead us to observe, that many things in the conduct of Providence are at present mysterious and unintelligible. The truth of this observation will not be called in question. It is indeed very readily admitted by all ; and ever since the beginning of the world has been the foundation of many a complaint, and of much scepticism concerning the government of heaven.—That human affairs are not left to roll on according to mere chance, and that Providence interposes in them to a certain degree, is made evident by various tokens to every candid mind. But the perplexity and trouble of the thoughtful inquirer arises from observing that Providence
 appears

appears not to pursue any regular or consistent plan. An unaccountable mixture of light and darkness presents itself to us, when we attempt to trace the affairs of the world up to any wise and righteous administration. We see justice and order begun; but on many occasions they seem to be deserted. The ray of light which we had traced for a while, suddenly forsakes us; and, where we had looked for the continuance of order, we meet with confusion and disappointment.—For instance; when we examine the constitution of the human mind, we discern evident marks of its being framed with a view to favour and reward virtue. Conscience is endowed with signal authority to check vice. It brings home uneasiness and remorse to the bad; and it soothes and supports the righteous with self-approbation and peace. The ordinary course of human things is made to coincide in some degree with this constitution of our nature. The worthy and the good are, in general, honoured and esteemed.

S E R M.

IX.

S E R M. esteemed. *He that walketh uprightly, is,*
 IX. *for the most part, found to walk surely.*

The chief misfortunes that befall us in life can be traced to some vices or follies which we have committed; and it almost never happens but the *finer's own wickedness is made, sooner or later, to reprove him, and his backslidings to correct him.*

All this carries the impress of a just Providence, of a wise and a benevolent administration of the universe. We cannot avoid perceiving that the Almighty hath *set his throne for judgment.* At the same time, when we pursue our inquiries, the Almighty appears to *hold back the face of his throne, and to spread his cloud upon it**. For in looking abroad into the world, how many scenes do we behold, which are far from corresponding with any ideas we could form of the government of Heaven? Many nations of the earth we see lying in a state of barbarity and misery; sunk in such gross ignorance

* Job xxvi. 9.

ignorance as degrades them below the S E R M.
rank of rational beings; or abandoned IX.
to be the prey of cruel oppression and
tyranny. When we look to the state of
individuals around us, we hear the la-
mentations of the unhappy on every
hand. We meet with weeping parents,
and mourning friends. We behold the
young cut off in the flower of their days,
and the aged left desolate in the midst of
sorrows. The useful and virtuous are
swept away, and the worthless left to
flourish. The lives of the best men are
often filled with discouragements and
disappointed hopes. Merit languishes
in neglected solitude; and vanity and
presumption gain the admiration of the
world. From the scourge of calumny,
and from the hand of violence, the inju-
red look up to God as the Avenger of
their cause; but often they look up in
vain. He is a God that hideth himself.
He dwelleth, as to them, in the secret
place of darkness; or, if he dwelleth in
light,

SERM. light, it is in *light to which no man can*
 IX. *approach*. Resignation may seal up their
 lips; but in silence they drop the tear,
 and mourn while they adore.

SUCH, it must not be dissembled, are the difficulties which encounter us when we attempt to trace the present ways of God. At the same time, upon reflection, we may be satisfied that causes can be assigned for things appearing in this unfavourable light; and that there is no reason to be surpris'd at the divine conduct being mysterious at present.

The monarchy of the universe is a great and complicated system. It comprehends numberless generations of men, who are brought forth to act their parts for purposes unknown to us. It includes two worlds at once; the world that now is, and which is only a small portion of existence; and a world that is to come, which endures for eternity. To us, no more than the beginnings of things are visible. We see only some broken parts
 of

of a great whole. We trace but a few S E R M.
links of that chain of being, which, IX.
by secret connections, binds together
the present and the future. Such know-
ledge is afforded us as is sufficient for
supplying the exigencies and wants of
our present state; but it does no more.
Peeping abroad from a dark corner of the
universe, we attempt in vain to explore
the counsels that govern the world. It is
an attempt to sound an unfathomable
deep with a scanty line; and with a fee-
ble wing to ascend above the stars. In
any complicated work, even of human
art, it is found necessary to be acquainted
with the design of the whole, in order to
judge of the fitness of its parts. In a
scheme so complex as the administration
of the world, where all the parts refer to
one another, and where what is seen is
often subordinate to what is invisible,
how is it possible but our judgments
must be often erroneous, and our com-
plaints ill founded? If a peasant or a cõt-
tager be incapable of judging of the go-
vernment.

S E R M. vernment of a mighty empire, is it sur-
 IX. } prising that we should be at loss concern-
 ing the conduct of the Almighty to-
 wards his creatures? *What I do thou know-
 est not now.*

BUT, on this argument still more can be said for our satisfaction. We are to observe, that complete information respecting the ways of God, not only was not to be expected here; but, moreover, that it would have been hurtful, if granted to us in our present state. It would have proved inconsistent with that state; with the actions which we have to perform in it, and the duties we have to fulfil. It would indeed have overthrown the whole design of our being placed in this world. We are placed here under the trial of our virtue. Ignorance of the events that are ordained to befall us, ignorance of the plans and the decrees of heaven, enter necessarily into a state of trial. In order to exercise both our intellectual and moral powers, and to carry them forward to
 our

improvement, we must be left to find S E R M.
our way in the midst of difficulties and IX.
doubts, of hardships, and sufferings.

We must be taught to act our part with constancy, though the reward of our constancy be distant. We must learn to bear with patience whatever our Creator judges proper to lay upon us, though we see not the reason of the hardships he inflicts. If we were let into the secret of the whole plan of Providence; if the justice of Heaven were, in every step of its procedure, made manifest to our view, man would no longer be the creature he now is, nor would his present state answer any purpose of discipline or trial.

Mystery and darkness, therefore, must of necessity now take place in the course of things. Our present state can be no other than a state of twilight or dawn, where dubious forms shall often present themselves to us, and where we shall find ourselves in a middle condition between complete light and total darkness. Had we enjoyed no evidence of a just Judge
ruling

S E R M. ruling the earth, and of his providence
 IX. interposing in our affairs, virtue would
 have been altogether deprived of its encouragement and support. Had the evidence, on the other hand, been so strong as to place the hand of the Almighty constantly before our eyes, the intention of our present existence would have been defeated, and no trial of virtue have remained. Instead, therefore, of complaining of the obscurity which at present covers the conduct of Providence, we see that, on the whole, we have reason to submit and adore.

II. THE text suggests that, though what God is doing, or what he intends to do, we *know not now*, yet there is ground to believe, that at some future period we shall receive information. *What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter*. The question here arises, what that *hereafter* is to which we are to look for the solution of our present doubts?

IN the first place, *hereafter* may, on S E R M.
some occasions, refer to the subsequent IX.
course of events in this world. It often happens that the consequences of things throw light on the designs of God. The history of Providence, in proportion as it advances, disembroils itself. Though our present condition forbids extensive and complete information, yet as much is sometimes allowed to appear as gives us favourable openings into the righteous and benevolent counsels of heaven.— Thus, in the public affairs of the world, it has been frequently seen, that from the most unpromising causes important and beneficent effects have, in the sequel, arisen. In our own country, at one period, the violent passions of a prince gave beginning to the Reformation. At another period, arbitrary attempts against religion and liberty occasioned that happy Revolution which has formed the æra of national prosperity. In many instances, *the wrath of man* has been made to *praise God*. Those wars and commotions that shake the moral

S E R M. IX. ral world have answered similar purposes with tempests in the natural world, of purging the air from noxious vapours, and restoring it to a temperature more found and wholesome. From the midst of confusion order has been made to spring, and from temporary mischiefs, lasting advantages to arise.—In all cases of this nature, with which sacred and civil history abounds, secret designs of heaven were going on, which were unfolded in the end. The wheel was always in motion. The hand of the clock was advancing with unperceived progress, till the moment came of its striking the appointed hour.

In like manner, with respect to individuals, there is often a *hereafter* in the course of their lives, which discloses and justifies the ways of God. Not to mention the good effects which misfortunes are found to produce on the minds of men, by checking their vices, and correcting their errors, innumerable exemplifications can be given, of misfortunes paving their way to future advancement
in

in the world. We are always querulous and impatient when designs succeed not according to our wish. Ignorant of what futurity is to bring forward, occupied with nothing but the present, we exclaim, Where is God? Where the sceptre of righteousness? *Hath he forgotten to be gracious?* or doth he indeed, see, and is there knowledge in the Most High?—*God seeth not as man seeth:* He looketh not merely to what you suffer, but to what the effect of these sufferings is to be. Consider only in how different a light, the Patriarch Joseph would view the events of his life after he had seen in what they had terminated, from the light in which he saw them, when led away by the Ishmaelites as a slave, or when thrown by Potiphar into the Egyptian prison. We murmur against Providence, just as the impetuous youth frets against his instructors and tutors, who are keeping him under a strict, and as he thinks a needless, discipline. He knows not that, by their instruction and discipline, they

are

S E R M.
IX.

SERM. are laying the foundation of his future fortunes; of the wealth which he is to acquire, and of the advancement to which he is to rise in the world. What may justly be said to him by his tutors and instructors, is equally applicable to us all under our present state of education; *What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.*—Regarding, then, the unknown issue of all worldly events in this life, let us never despair, let us never think dishonourably of the government of God; but have patience till his providence accomplish its designs in its own way, and at its own time. *Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him, yet judgment is before him; therefore trust thou in him*.*

IN the second place, the expression of *hereafter* in the text must be understood to refer, in its full extent, not to future events in this life, but to a subsequent state

* Job xxxv. 14.

state of being. For this life is no more SERM.
31K.
than the beginning of the mighty and
extensive plans of Providence. The
seeds are only now sown, of what is to
ripen and come forth, at the harvest of
the world; when the revolution of the
great moral year shall be finished, and
the government of God shall obtain its
full completion. It is the chief scope
of religion to direct our view to this
period; and it hath often taught us that
the knowledge of the ways of God,
then enjoyed by the blessed, shall con-
stitute a chief article of their felicity.
*Now we see through a glass darkly; but
then face to face. Now we know in part;
but then we shall know even as we are
known. When that which is perfect is
come, then that which is in part shall be
done away. In God's light we shall see
light*.* The reasons that required ob-
scurity to remain for a while on the ways
of God no longer subsist. The education
VOL. IV. N of

* 1 Cor. xiii. 10, 12. Psalm xxxvi. 9.

B E R M. of good men is completed; and the in-
 IX.
 ~~~~~  
 tention of those steps of education,  
 which once they could not compre-  
 hend, now becomes apparent.—Why  
 this man was prematurely carried away  
 from the world in the beginning of a  
 promising course; why that deserving  
 family were left overwhelmed with grief  
 and despair, by the loss of one who was  
 their sole benefactor and support; why  
 friendships cemented by tender ties  
 were suddenly torn asunder by death:  
 These are inquiries to which we can  
 now make no reply; and which throw  
 a dark gloom over the conduct of the  
 Almighty. But the spirits of the just  
 above, who are admitted to a larger  
 view of the ways of God, see the rea-  
 sons of such counsels. They see that  
 one man was seasonably taken away  
 from dangers and evils to come, which  
 unknown to him, were hovering over  
 his head. They see that Providence  
 was in secret preparing unexpected blef-  
 sings for the family who appeared to be  
 left disconsolate and hopeless. They  
 see that it was time for friendships  
 to

to be dissolved, when their longer con-  
tinuance would to some of the parties  
have proved a snare. Where we be-  
hold nothing but the rod of power  
stretched forth, they discern an interpo-  
sition of the hand of mercy.

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Let us wait till this promised *here-  
after* arrive, and we shall in like man-  
ner be satisfied concerning the events  
that now disturb and perplex us. We  
shall then know why so much darkness  
and misery have been so long permitted  
to remain on the earth, and so much  
oppression and tyranny to prevail among  
the nations. We shall see rising, as  
from the ashes of the old world, a new  
and beautiful structure; *new heavens  
and a new earth; wherein dwelleth righ-  
teousness.* As wide as is the difference  
between the appearance of the world,  
when it lay in its primitive chaos, *with-  
out form and void*, and the appearance  
it has now assumed, when resplendent  
with the light of the sun, and decked  
with the beauties of nature; such is  
the difference between the divine plans

**TERM** in their beginnings, and in their full  
**IX.** completion. At the conclusion, and  
 not till then, 'the glory of the Lord  
 shall become manifest to all; and, as it  
 is described in the book of the Revela-  
 tion, a voice shall be heard from every  
 creature which is in heaven and on the  
 earth, and under the earth, saying, Bless-  
 ing, and honour, and power, and glory,  
 be to him that sitteth on the throne.  
 Great and marvellous are thy works,  
 Lord God Almighty; just and true are  
 thy ways, thou King of saints\*.

APPLICATION of the doctrines that  
 have been illustrated may be made to  
 two classes of men.

*First*, To sceptics; who, from the  
 present mysterious conduct of provi-  
 dence, hastily draw the conclusion,  
 that no government is exercised over  
 human affairs, but that all things  
 are suffered indiscriminately to come  
 alike to all men.—I have shown that  
 from

\* Rev. v. 13.—xv. 3.

from the inadequate views which we SER. M.  
are at present able to take of the gene- IX.  
ral system, such mysterious appearances  
of Providence must be expected to  
take place. Not only so, but I have  
also shown it to be fit and necessary  
that this mixture of obscurity should  
now remain; as a full display of regu-  
lar justice and order would be inconsis-  
tent with the moral improvement of  
men in this life.—Let me desire the  
sceptic to look to the state of the natu-  
ral world. When he thinks of the order  
and magnificence that prevail in it, he  
will, perhaps, be unwilling to pro-  
nounce it the mere production of  
chance. He cannot but recognise the  
hand of Intelligence, and acknowledge  
it to have proceeded from a designing  
Cause. I ask him, Whether in the  
natural world he discerns not as many  
mysterious and puzzling appearances as  
are to be found in the moral world?  
Are not destructive storms, burning  
mountains, uninhabitable deserts, as dif-  
ficult

SERM. <sup>IX.</sup> difficult to be reconciled to his pre-conceived ideas of supreme wisdom and goodness in the Creator, as the sufferings and afflictions which in the course of Providence befall the just? The natural and moral world are, in this respect, counterparts to one another. Both are marked with the same characters, and carry the impress of the same powerful and gracious hand. In both, it is evidently the intention of the first Author not to render every thing level to our capacity; but in the midst of high design and order, to allow certain objects to appear, which contradict the ideas we had formed, and mock our vain researches. Now, if we are obliged to admit that the order and beauty of the natural world sufficiently prove it to be the work of a wise Creator, notwithstanding the seeming deformities which it exhibits; are we not led, by the same train of reasoning, to conclude that the moral world is under the direction of a wise Governor, though



though much of what he now does we S E R M.  
cannot satisfactorily explain ? IX.

*Secondly*, THE doctrine of the text is to be applied not only for silencing sceptics but for comforting the pious. Never let them be dejected by the darkness which now covers the ways of the Almighty. If he withdraws himself from their view, it is not because he neglects them; but because they are incapable of comprehending his designs; because it were not for their good that all his designs were revealed to them.—Instead of perplexing themselves about what is obscure, let them rest on the clear and authentic discoveries that have been given of the divine goodness. Let them rest on those great and signal facts that prove it; particularly on that illustrious fact, the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, He that *spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all*, will assuredly not always conceal himself from those who serve him. Though what he does they *know not now*, the  
time

SERM. time approaches when *they shall know*  
 IX. *hereafter.* Till that time come, let  
 them believe and trust; let them hope  
 and adore. From this conclusion let  
 them never depart, that to *fear God and*  
*keep his commandments,* is in every situa-  
 tion the truest wisdom; that, if there be  
 government in the universe at all, the  
 virtuous and the worthy are loved and  
 protected by Heaven; that in *due sea-*  
*son they shall reap if they faint not; for*  
*the care of them is with the Lord, and*  
*their reward with the Most High.*

# S E R M O N X.

## ON THE SLAVERY OF VICE.

2 PETER ii. 19.

*While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.*

**B**ONDAGE and subjection are disagreeable sounds to the ear, disagreeable ideas to the mind. The advocates of vice, taking advantage of those natural impressions, have in every age employed them for discrediting religion. They represent it as the bondage and confinement

S E R M.  
X.

S E R M. confinement of the free-born soul of  
 X. man ; as a state of perpetual constraint,  
 formed by a system of severe rules,  
 which designing men have contrived to  
 impose as fetters on the multitude. On  
 the other hand, they paint a licentious  
 course to themselves, and hold it out to  
 the world, as the gay and pleasurable  
 enjoyment of life ; where, having sur-  
 mounted the prejudices of education,  
 and the timorous scruples of conscience,  
 men can think and act at pleasure, and  
 give full scope to every wish of the  
 heart.—But what if those pretended  
 sons of freedom be themselves held in  
 miserable subjection, and their boasts of  
 liberty be no more than the *swelling*  
*words of vanity?* The Apostle asserts  
 in the text, that while they *promise li-*  
*berly* to others, they are *the servants,* or  
 slaves, of *corruption, overcome, and*  
*brought into bondage by it.* This asser-  
 tion of the Apostle I purpose to illu-  
 strate. I shall endeavour to make it  
 appear, that no true liberty can arise  
 from vice ; that bad men undergo the  
 worst

worst servitude; and that no one SERM.  
is free, but he who is virtuous and X.  
good.

IT is necessary to begin with removing false ideas of liberty, and shewing in what it truly consists. We are not to imagine that to be free imports our being set loose from restraint or rule of every kind. No man, in any condition of life, is at liberty to act always as he pleases, and to gratify every wish he forms. The nature of the human state necessarily imposes on all men various restraints. The laws of society allow no one to indulge himself in pursuits or pleasures that are injurious to his neighbour. Even our own nature limits our pleasures within certain bounds. All our desires cannot be gratified together. They frequently interfere, and require him who would indulge one favourite passion, to deny himself in another. Distinctions, therefore, must be made, preferences be given, and some general regulation of conduct be observed by every one who consults his  
own

SERMON OWN welfare. If there be any regula-  
 tion which ensures us of safety and hap-  
 piness, to be disengaged from the obser-  
 vance of that regulation is no article of  
 liberty; at least of such liberty as a wise  
 man would wish to enjoy. It is in  
 effect to be turned loose to our own  
 ruin. It is such liberty as a blind man  
 enjoys, of wandering at random, and  
 striking into every devious path, with-  
 out a guide to direct his steps, and save  
 him from destruction.

That unbounded licentiousness, there-  
 fore, which sinners prefer to every re-  
 gulation of conduct, is altogether diffe-  
 rent from true freedom. It is in moral  
 behaviour the same as anarchy is in a  
 state, where law and order are extinct.  
 Anarchy, surely, is no less incompati-  
 ble with true liberty than absolute des-  
 potism; and of the two it is hard to say  
 which is the least eligible, or the most  
 miserable state. Liberty by no means  
 supposes the absence of all government.  
 It only supposes that the govern-  
 ment under which we are placed is  
 wise; and that the restraints to  
 which

which we voluntarily submit ourselves SERM.  
have been contrived for the general X.  
interest.

To be free, therefore, imports, in general, our being placed in such circumstances, that within the bounds of justice and good order, we can act according to our own deliberate choice, and take such measures for our conduct as we have reason to believe are conducive, to our welfare; without being obstructed either by external force, or by violent internal impulse. This is that happy and dignified state which every wise man earnestly wishes to enjoy. The advantages which result from it are chiefly these three; freedom of choice; independence of mind; boldness and security. In opposition to these distinguishing characters of liberty, I now proceed to shew that, in the first place, vice deprives bad men of free choice in their actions; that, in the second place, it brings them under a slavish dependence on external circumstances; and that, in the third place, it reduces them to that abject, cowardly,

SERM. cowardly, and disquieted state which is  
 X. essentially characteristic of bondage:

I. VICE is inconsistent with liberty, as it deprives sinners of the power of free choice, by bringing them under the dominion of passions and habits. Religion and virtue address themselves to reason. They call us to look round on every side; to think well of the consequences of our actions; and, before we take any step of importance, to compare the good with the evil that may ensue from it. He therefore who follows their dictates, acts the part of a man who freely consults, and chuses, for his own interest. But vice can make no pretensions of this kind. It awaits not the test of deliberate comparison and choice; but overpowers us at once by some striking impression of present advantage or enjoyment. It hurries us with the violence of passion; captivates us by the allurements of pleasure; or dazzles us by the glare of riches. The sinner yields to the impulse, merely  
 because



because he cannot resist it. Reason re-  
monstrates; conscience endeavours to  
check him; but all in vain. Having  
once allowed some strong passion to  
gain the ascendant, he has thrown him-  
self into the middle of a torrent, against  
which he may sometimes faintly strug-  
gle, but the impetuosity of the stream  
bears him along. In this situation he  
is so far from being free, that he is not  
master of himself. He does not go,  
but is driven; tossed, agitated, and im-  
pelled; passive, like a ship to the vio-  
lence of the waves.

After passion has for a while exercis-  
ed its tyrannical sway, its vehemence  
may by degrees subside. But when by  
long indulgence, it has established ha-  
bits of gratification, the sinner's bon-  
dage becomes then more confirmed, and  
more miserable. For during the heat  
of pursuit he is little capable of reflec-  
tion. But, when his ardour is abated,  
and nevertheless, a vitious habit root-  
ed, he has full leisure to perceive the  
heavy yoke he has brought upon him-  
self. How many slaves do we see in  
the

SERM.

X.

S E R M. the world to intemperance, and all kinds  
 X of criminal pleasure, merely through the  
 influence of customs which they had allowed to become so inveterate that it was not in their power to alter them? Are they not often reduced to a condition so wretched, that when their licentious pleasures have become utterly insipid, they are still forced to continue them, solely because they cannot refrain; not because the indulgence gives them pleasure, but because abstinence would give them pain; and this too, even when they are obliged at last to condemn their habits of life, as injuring their fortune, impairing their constitution, or disgracing their character? Vice is not of such a nature that we can say to it, *Hitherto shalt thou come and no further.* Having once entered into its territories, it is not in our power to make a retreat when we please. *He that committeth sin is the servant of sin.* No man who has once yielded up the government of his mind, and given loose rein to his desires and passions, can tell how far these  
 may

may carry him. He may be brought **SERM.**  
 into such a desperate state, that nothing **X.**  
 shall remain for him but to look back  
 with regret upon the forsaken path of  
 innocence and liberty; and, severely  
 conscious of the thraldom he suffers, to  
 groan under fetters which he despairs  
 of throwing off. *Can the Ethiopian*  
*change his skin, or the leopard his spots?*  
*then may ye also do good who are accus-*  
*tom'd to do evil\*.*

Vice confirms its dominion, and ex-  
 tends it still farther over the soul, by  
 compelling the sinner to support one  
 crime by means of another. Not only  
 is he enslaved to those vices which take  
 their rise from his own inclination, but  
 they render others necessary, to which,  
 against his inclination, he must sub-  
 mit; and thereby strengthen the com-  
 manding power of iniquity within  
 him. The immoderate love of plea-  
 sure, for instance, leads him into ex-  
 pence beyond his fortune. In order to

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support

\* Jeremiah xiii. 23.

SEN M. support that expence, he is obliged to  
 X.  
 have recourse to low and dishonourable  
 methods of gain, which originally he de-  
 spised. To cover these, he is forced  
 upon arts of dissimulation and fraud.  
 One instance of fraud obliges him to  
 support it by another; till, in the end,  
 there arises a character of complicated  
 vice; of luxury shooting forth into  
 baseness, dishonesty, injustice, and  
 perhaps cruelty. It is thus that one  
 favourite passion brings in a tribe of  
 auxiliaries to complete the dominion of  
 sin. Among all our corrupt passions  
 there is a strong and intimate connecti-  
 on. When any one of them is adopt-  
 ed into our family, it never quits us un-  
 til it has fathered upon us all its kind-  
 red.—By such means as these, by the  
 violence of passions, by the power of  
 habits, and by the connection of one  
 vice with another, sin establishes that  
 servitude over the will, which deprives  
 bad men of all power of free choice in  
 their actions.

II. THE slavery produced by vice  
 appears

appears in the dependence under which S E R M.  
it brings the sinner, to circumstances of X.  
external fortune. One of the favourite  
characters of liberty, is the independ-  
ence it bestows. He who is truly a  
freeman is above all servile compliances,  
and abject subjection. He is able to  
rest upon himself; and while he re-  
gards his superiors with proper defe-  
rence, neither debases himself by cring-  
ing to them, nor is tempted to purchase  
their favour by dishonourable means.  
But the sinner has forfeited every pri-  
vilege of this nature. His passions and  
habits render him an absolute dependant  
on the world, and the world's favour;  
on the uncertain goods of fortune, and  
the fickle humours of men. For it is  
by these he subsists, and among these  
his happiness is sought; according as  
his passions determine him to pursue  
pleasures, riches, or preferments. Hav-  
ing no fund within himself whence to  
draw enjoyment, his only resource is in  
things without. His hopes and fears  
all hang upon the world. He partakes  
in all its vicissitudes; and is moved and

SERM. shaken by every wind of fortune. This  
 X. is to be in the strictest sense a slave to  
 the world.

Religion and virtue, on the other hand, confer on the mind principles of noble independence. *The upright man is satisfied from himself.* He despises not the advantages of fortune; but he centers not his happiness in them. With a moderate share of them he can be contented; and contentment is felicity. Happy in his own integrity, conscious of the esteem of good men, reposing firm trust in the providence, and the promises of God, he is exempted from servile dependence on other things. He can wrap himself up in a good conscience, and look forward, without terror, to the change of the world. Let all things shift around him as they please, he believes that, by the divine ordination, they shall be made *to work together* in the issue *for his good*: And therefore, having much to hope from God, and little to fear from the world, he can be easy in every state. One who possesses within himself such an establish-  
 ment

ment of mind, is truly free.—But shall I call that man free, who has nothing that is his own, no property assured; whose very heart is not his own, but rendered the appendage of external things, and the sport of fortune? Is that man free, let his outward condition be ever so splendid, whom his imperious passions detain at their call, whom they send forth at their pleasure, to drudge and toil, and to beg his only enjoyment from the casualties of the world? Is he free, who must flatter and lie to compass his ends; who must bear with this man's caprice, and that man's scorn; must profess friendship where he hates, and respect where he contemns; who is not at liberty to appear in his own colours, nor to speak his own sentiments; who dares not be honest, lest he should be poor?— Believe it, no chains bind so hard, no fetters are so heavy, as those which fasten the corrupted heart to this treacherous world; no dependence is more contemptible than that under which the voluptuous, the covetous, or the ambitious

SERM. bitious man lies to the means of pleasure, gain, or power. Yet this is the boasted liberty, which vice promises, as the recompence of setting us free from the salutary restraints of virtue.

III. ANOTHER character of the slavery of vice, is that mean, cowardly, and disquieted state, to which it reduces the sinner. Boldness and magnanimity have ever been accounted the native effects of liberty. He who enjoys it, having nothing to apprehend from oppressive power, performs the offices, and enjoys the comforts of life, with a manly and undisturbed mind. Hence his behaviour is dignified, and his sentiments are honourable; while he who is accustomed to bend under servile subjection, has always been found mean-spirited, timorous, and base.— Compare, in these respects, the virtuous and the vicious man, and you will easily see to which of them the characteristics of freedom most justly belong. The man of virtue, relying on a good conscience and the protection of Heaven,



*On the Slavery of Vice.*

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ven, acts with firmness and courage; BERM.  
and in the discharge of his duty, fears X  
not the face of man. The man of vice,  
conscious of his low and corrupt aims,  
shrinks before the steadfast and piercing  
eye of integrity; is ever looking around  
him with anxious and fearful circumspec-  
tion, and thinking of subterfuges, by  
which he may escape from danger. The  
one is *bold as a lion*; the other *fieth when  
no man pursueth*. To the one, nothing  
appears contemptible, by which he can  
procure any present advantage. The  
other looks with disdain on whatever  
would degrade his character. "I will  
not," says he, "so demean myself, as  
"to catch the favour of the greatest  
"man, by this or that low art. It  
"shall not be said or thought of me,  
"that I did what was base in order to  
"make my fortune. Let others stoop  
"so low, who cannot be without the  
"favours of the world. But I can  
"want them, and therefore at such a  
"price I will not purchase them." This

is

SERM. is the voice of true liberty; and  
X. speaks that greatness of mind which it  
 is formed to inspire.

Corresponding to that abject disposition which characterises a bad man, are the fears that haunt him. The terrors of a slave dwell on his mind, and often appear in his behaviour. For, guilt is never free from suspicion and alarm. The sinner is afraid, sometimes, of the partners of his crimes, lest they betray him; sometimes of those who have suffered by his crimes, lest they revenge themselves; frequently, of the world around him, lest it detect him; and what is worst of all, he is reduced to be afraid of himself. There is a witness within him that testifies against his misdeeds; and threatens him in secret, when other alarms leave him. Conscience holds up to his view the image of his past crimes, with this inscription engraved upon it, "*God will bring every work into judgment.*" How opposite is such a state as this, to the peaceful security arising from the liberty enjoyed by  
 the

the virtuous?—Were there nothing S E R M.  
more in the circumstances of finners to X.  
affix upon them the marks of servitude,  
this alone would be sufficient, that, as  
the scripture expresses it, *through fear  
of death they are all their lifetime subject  
to bondage\**. Death sets all other cap-  
tives free. The slave who digs in the  
mine, or labours at the oar, can rejoice  
in the prospect of laying down his bur-  
den together with his life; and tastes  
the hope of being at last on equal terms  
with his cruel oppressor. But to the  
slave of guilt there arises no hope from  
death. On the contrary, he is obliged  
to look forward with constant terror  
to this most certain of all events, as  
the conclusion of all his hopes and the  
commencement of his greatest miseries.

I HAVE thus set before you such  
clear and unequivocal marks of the ser-  
vitude

\* Heb. ii. 15.

SERMON. *virtude undergone by sinners, as fully*  
 I. *verify the assertion in the text, that a*  
*state of vice and corruption is a state of*  
*bondage. In order to perceive how se-*  
*vere a bondage it is, let us attend to*  
*some peculiar circumstances of aggrava-*  
*tion which belong to it.*

First, It is a bondage to which the mind itself, the native seat of liberty, is subjected. In other cases, a brave man can comfort himself with reflecting that, let tyrants do their worst, let prisons or fetters be his lot, his mind remains unconquered and free. Of this liberty they cannot rob him; here he moves in a higher sphere, above the reach of oppression or confinement. But what avails the show of external liberty, to one who has lost the government of himself? As our Saviour reasons, in another case, *If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness?* So we may reason here, if that part of thy nature, thy mind, thy will, by which only thou canst enjoy and relish liberty, be itself  
 in

in bondage to evil passions and habits, **SERM.**  
how miserable must be that bondage? **X.**

Next, It is aggravated by this consideration, that it is a bondage which we have brought upon ourselves. To have been forced into slavery, is misfortune and misery. But to have renounced our liberty and chosen to be slaves, is the greatest reproach added to the greatest misery. Moments there frequently must be, when a sinner is sensible of the degradation of his state; when he feels with pain the slavish dependence under which he is brought to fortune and the world, to violent passions and settled habits, and to fears and apprehensions arising from conscious guilt. In such moments, how cruel is the reflection, that of all this disgrace and misery he has been the author to himself; that by voluntary compliance, he has given to his passions that haughty ascendant which they now exercise over him; has forged the chains with which he is bound; and sold himself to do iniquity!

Lastly,

SERM.

X  
~

Lastly, The servitude of vice is accompanied with this farther aggravation, that it is subjection to our own servants. These desires and passions, which the sinner has raised to lawless rule, were given us as instruments of self-preservation; but were plainly designed to be under the direction of a higher power. Of themselves, they are headstrong and blind; they bear all the marks of intended subordination; and conscience is invested with every ensign of authority and supremacy. But sin inverts the whole frame of human nature. It compels reason to bow down before those passions which it was formed to command; and leads it, as it were in triumph, to grace the shameful conquest of its ministers and servants. It has been always observed that none are so insolent in power, as they who have usurped an authority to which they had no right; and so it is found to hold in this instance. The desires and passions of a vicious man, having once obtained an unlimited sway, trample him under their feet. They  
make

make him feel that he is subject to divers, S E R M.  
and contradictory as well as imperious X.  
masters; who often pull him different  
ways. His soul is rendered the recep-  
tacle of many repugnant and jarring dis-  
positions; and resembles some barbar-  
ous country, cantoned out into different  
principalities, who are continually wag-  
ing war on one another.—Such is the  
state into which finners have brought  
themselves, in order to be free from the  
supposed confinement of virtue. Where  
they had promised themselves nothing  
but ease, and pleasure, they are made to  
experience restraints more severe, and  
mortifications more painful, than any  
which they would have undergone un-  
der the discipline of religion.

It will perhaps be contended by some,  
that although the representation which  
has now been given of the slavery of sin  
holds true in certain instances, yet that  
it is applicable only to those who come  
under the description of atrocious finners.  
They imagine that a certain moderate  
course may be held in vice, by means of  
which,

SERMON. which, men, without throwing altogether aside the restraints of reason, may enjoy an easy and pleasurable life.—

X.

By reasoning thus, my friends, you flatter and deceive yourselves to your own destruction. Be assured, that, by every vicious indulgence, you are making an approach to a state of complete slavery; you are forfeiting a certain share of your liberty; how soon the whole of it may be forfeited, you are not aware. It is true that all which has now been said of the servitude of sin, applies only to a character corrupted in the extreme. But, remember that to this extreme no man ever arrives at once. He passes through many of those intermediate stages, in one of which you are now perhaps found. Vice always creeps by degrees; and insensibly twines around us those concealed fetters by which we are at last completely bound.—As you value therefore your liberty and your happiness, avoid every approach to evil. Consider all vicious pleasures as enchanted ground, by entering on which, you will be farther and



and farther enfnared within the magic SERM. circle, till at length you are precluded <sup>X.</sup> from all retreat; The most pure and virtuous man is always the freest. The religion of Christ is justly entitled the *perfect law of liberty*.\* It is only when the *Son makes us free, that we are free indeed*: and it was with reason the Psalmist said, *I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy precepts.*†

\* James i. 25.

† Psalm cxix. 45.

## SERMON XI.

### On the IMPORTANCE of PUBLIC WORSHIP.

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PSALM xxvi. 8.

*Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy  
house, and the place where thine honour  
dwelleth.*

SERM.  
XI. **G**OD is a Spirit, and they that worship  
him, must worship him in spirit and in  
truth. That religion chiefly consists in  
an inward principle of goodness, is be-  
yond dispute, and that its value and effi-  
cacy are derived from its effects in puri-  
fying the heart, and reforming the life.  
All

All external services, which have not S E R M.  
this tendency, are entirely insignificant. XI  
They degenerate into mere superstition,  
equally unacceptable to God, and un-  
profitable to man. Hence they are so  
often treated in scripture with high con-  
tempt, when substituted in the room of  
the important duties of a virtuous life.

Notwithstanding this, it is certain that  
external services have their own place,  
and a considerable one too, in the system  
of religion. What their proper place is  
no one can be at a loss to discern, who  
will only make a just distinction be-  
tween the means, and the end, in reli-  
gion. It is evident there is danger of  
men's erring here, either on one side or  
other; and it is certain that they have  
erred on both. After it was observed,  
that mankind were prone to lay too  
much weight on the external parts of  
religion, it began to be thought, that  
no weight was to be allowed to them  
at all. The time was, when all reli-  
gion centered in attending the duties  
of the church, and paying veneration to

S E R M whatever was accounted sacred. This  
 XI. alone sanctified the character, and com-  
 pensated every blemish in moral conduct. From this extreme, the spirit of the age seems to be running fast into the opposite extreme, of holding every thing light that belongs to public worship. But if superstition be an evil, and a very great one it undoubtedly is, irreligion is not a smaller evil: And though the *form of godliness* may often remain, when the *power* of it is wanting; yet the *power* cannot well subsist where the *form* is altogether gone.—The holy Psalmist, whose words are now before us, discovers much better principles. Expressing always the highest regard for the laws of God, and the precepts of virtue, he breathes, at the same time, a spirit of pure devotion. Though loaded with the cares of royalty, and encircled with the splendor of a court, he thought it well became him to show respect to the great Lord of nature; and on many occasions expresses, as he does in the text, his delight in the public service of the temple.

Lord,

*Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy* <sup>SER M</sup>  
*house, and the place where thine honour* <sup>XI.</sup>  
*dwelleth.* In discoursing from which  
words I purpose to shew the importance  
of the public worship of God, and the  
benefits resulting from it. I shall con-  
sider it in three lights; as it respects God;  
as it respects the world; as it respects  
ourselves.

I. LET us consider it with respect to  
God. If there exist a Supreme Being,  
the Creator of the world, no consequence  
appears more natural and direct than this,  
that he ought to be worshipped by his  
creatures, with every outward expression  
of submission and honour. We need only  
appeal to every man's heart, whether this  
be not a principle which carries along  
with it its own obligation, that to Him  
who is the Fountain of our life, and the  
Father of our mercies; to Him who has  
raised up that beautiful structure of the  
universe in which we dwell, and where  
we are surrounded with so many bles-  
sings and comforts; solemn acknowledge-  
ment

S E R M. XI. } ments of gratitude should be made, praises and prayers should be offered, and all suitable marks of dependence on him be expressed.—This obligation extends beyond the silent and secret sentiments of our hearts. Besides private devotion, it naturally leads to associations for public worship; to open and declared professions of respect for the Deity. Where blessings are received in common, an obligation lies upon the community, jointly to acknowledge them. Sincere gratitude is always of open and diffusive nature. It loves to pour itself forth; to give free vent to its emotions; and, before the world, to acknowledge and honour a Benefactor.

So consonant is this to the natural sentiments of mankind, that all the nations of the earth have, as with one consent, agreed to institute some forms of worship; to hold meetings, at certain times, in honour of their deities. Survey the societies of men in their rudest state; explore the African deserts, the wilds of America,

or

or the distant islands of the ocean: and you will find that over all the earth some religious ceremonies have obtained. You will every where trace, in one form or other, the temple, the priest, and the offering. The prevalence of the most absurd superstitions furnishes this testimony to the truth, that in the hearts of all men the principle is engraved, of worship being due to that invisible Power who rules the world.—Herein consists the great excellency of Christian religion, that it hath instructed us in the simple and spiritual nature of that worship. Disencumbered of idle and unmeaning ceremonies, its ritual is pure, and worthy of a divine Author. Its positive institutions are few in number, most significant of spiritual things, and directly conducive to good life and practice. How inexcusable then are we, if placed in such happy circumstances, the sense of those obligations to the public worship of God shall be obliterated among us, which the light of nature inculcated,

S E R M.  
XI.

S E R M. inculcated, in some measure, on the most  
 XI. wild and barbarous nations?

The refinements of false philosophy have indeed suggested this shadow of objection, that God is too great to stand in need of any eternal service from his creatures; that our expressions of praise and honour are misplaced with respect to him, who is above all honour and all praise; that in his sight the homage we seek to pay must appear contemptible; and is therefore in itself superfluous and trifling.—But who hath thought those vain reasoners, that all expressions of gratitude and honour towards a superior become unsuitable, merely because that superior needs not any returns? Were they ever indebted to one whose favours they had it not in their power to repay; and, did they, on that account, feel themselves set loose from every obligation to acknowledge, and to praise their benefactor? On the contrary, the more disinterested his beneficence was, did not gratitude, in any ingenuous mind, burn with the greater ardour,



ardour, and prompt them the more S E R M.  
eagerly to seize every opportunity of XI.  
publicly testifying the feelings of their  
hearts;—Almighty God, it is true, is  
too great to need our service or homage.  
But he is also too good not to accept it,  
when it is the native expression of a  
grateful and generous mind. If pride  
and self-sufficiency stifle all sentiments  
of dependance on our Creator; if levity,  
and attachment to worldly pleasures,  
render us totally neglectful of expressing  
our thankfulness to Him for his blessings;  
do we not hereby discover such a want  
of proper feeling, such a degree of hard-  
ness and corruption in our affections, as  
shows us to be immoral and unworthy;  
and must justly expose us to the high  
displeasure of heaven? On the contrary,  
according to every notion which we can  
form of the Father of the universe, must  
it not be acceptable to him to behold  
his creatures properly affected in heart  
towards their great benefactor; as-  
sembling together to express, in acts  
of worship, that gratitude, love, and  
reverence

SERMON. reverence which they owe him; and  
 XI. thus nourishing and promoting in one  
 another an affectionate sense of his goodness? Are not such dispositions, and such a behaviour as this, intimately connected with all virtue?

*O Come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our maker. For he is our God; and we are the flock of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. The prayer of the upright is his delight. It cometh before him as incense, and the uplifting of their hands as the evening sacrifice.*—Having thus shown the reasonableness of public worship with respect to God, let us now,

II. CONSIDER its importance in another view, as it respects the world. When we survey the general state of mankind, we find them continually immersed in worldly affairs; busied about providing the necessaries of life, occupied in the pursuits of their pleasures, or eagerly prosecuting the advancement  
 of

of their interests. In such a situation of S E R M.  
things, a small measure of reflexion XI.  
might convince any one, that without  
some returns of sacred days, and some  
solemn calls to public worship, it were  
impossible to preserve in the world any  
sense of objects, so foreign to the gene-  
ral current of thought as an invisible  
Governor, and a future state. If it  
be of importance to the peace and good  
order of society, that there should prevail  
among men the belief of One in the hea-  
vens, who is the protector of righteous-  
ness and the avenger of crimes; if it be  
of importance that they be taught to  
look forward to a day of judgment, when  
they are to be brought to account for  
their most secret actions, and eternally  
rewarded or punished, according as their  
conduct has been good or evil; if such  
principles as these, I say, be of conse-  
quence to the public welfare, they cer-  
tainly enforce the authority of public  
worship, and prove the necessity of reli-  
gious instruction.

I speak

S E R M . I speak now particularly with a view  
XI. to the multitude, the great mass and  
body of the people. We all know,  
how seldom from education, or private  
instruction, they have the advantage of  
deriving sentiments of religion or mora-  
lity. Early obliged to labour for their  
bread, they would remain all their days  
in gross ignorance of every moral or  
sacred principle, were it not for those  
public assemblies in which they hear of  
God, and Christ, and judgment, and  
heaven and hell. Shut up those temples  
to which they resort with reverence;  
exclude them from the opportunities  
they now possess of receiving religious  
instruction, and imbibing religious ideas;  
and what can you expect them to be-  
come? no other than a ferocious rabble,  
who set free from checks of conscience,  
and fears of divine vengeance, would be  
prone to every outrage which they could  
commit with impunity. It is well  
known that, in the early ages of the  
world, sages and legislators who endea-  
voured to tame and to associate the bar-  
barous

barous hordes of men, found it necessary S E R M.  
for this purpose, to have recourse to re- XI.  
ligion. By bringing the rude multitudes  
to worship together, and at stated times  
and places, to join in hymns and songs  
to their deities, they gradually restrained  
them from violence, and trained them to  
subordination and civilized life.

During the progress of society in after  
periods, religious assemblies at church  
continue, I am persuaded, to have a very  
considerable influence on the civilization  
and improvement of the people. Even  
independent of effect upon their moral  
principles, by leading numbers of them  
to meet together in an orderly way, and  
in their most decent appearance, they  
tend to humanize and polish their man-  
ners. They strenghten the social con-  
nections, and promote friendly inter-  
course among those who are in the same  
neighbourhood, and in the same lines  
of life. It must at the same time,  
be agreeable to every humane mind to  
think, that one day in seven is allotted  
for rest to the poor from their daily la-  
bours,

S E R M. hours, and for such enjoyments of ease  
 and comfort as their station affords.  
 XI. It is the only day which gives them oc-  
 casion to feel themselves as belongin<sup>d</sup>  
 to the same class of beings with their su-  
 periors; when joining with them in the  
 same acts of worship, and recognizing  
 a common Lord. Amidst those dis-  
 tinctions which the difference of ranks  
 necessarily introduces into human so-  
 ciety, it is surely fit that there be some  
 occasions when man can meet with man  
 as a brother, in order that the pride of  
 the great may be checked; and the low  
 may be taught that, if they discharge pro-  
 perly their appointed part, they have  
 reason to expect, from the Lord of the  
 universe, the same rewards with the rich  
 and the mighty.

It will, I believe, be generally admit-  
 ted that forms of public worship, and  
 means of religious instruction, are impor-  
 tant, on several accounts, for the body of  
 the people, and belong to the mainte-  
 nance of public safety and order. But  
 many who admit this are apt to think,  
 that

that to the common people alone they may be left. To persons of liberal education and enlarged minds, what benefit can arise from hearing what they already know; and what, perhaps, is to be inculcated on them by those who are of inferior capacity to themselves?— Admitting this plea of superiority which their vanity forms, and setting aside for the present any personal obligation they are under to worship God, I must ask such persons, how they can expect that religious assemblies will be long respected by the lower ranks of men, if by men of rank and education they are discountenanced and forsaken? Do not they know, that those lower ranks are ready to copy the manners, and to follow the example of their superiors in all things; but assuredly in nothing more than in what appears to set them free from restraint, and to gratify licentiousness? While they acknowledge the importance, and even the necessity, of public religion to certain classes of men, do they, nevertheless, contribute by their  
behaviour

S E R M.  
XI.

S E R M. <sup>XI.</sup> behaviour to defeat the end of public religion, and to annihilate that importance which they ascribe to it?— They are employed in framing laws and statutes for preventing crimes, and keeping the disorderly multitude within bounds; and at the same time, by personally discountenancing public worship, they are weakening, they are even abolishing, among the multitude, that moral restraint, which is of more general influence upon manners than all the laws they frame. In vain they complain of the dishonesty of servants, of the insolence of mobs, of the attacks of the highwayman. To all these disorders they have themselves been accessory. By their open disregard of sacred institutions, they have disseminated profligacy among the people. They have broken down the floodgates which served to restrain the torrent; they have let it loose to overflow the land; and by the growing deluge may themselves be swept away.—But I must next argue upon a different ground; and proceed.

III. To



III. To set forth the importance of S E R M.  
the public worship of God to every in- XI.  
dividual, in every rank of life. What-  
ever his station be, he is still a man;  
and has the duties of a man to perform.  
Were his attendance on divine worship  
of no other effect, than to add counte-  
nance to a salutary institution, this alone  
would render it his duty. But more-  
over, we assert it to be his duty on his  
own account; if it be the duty of every  
man to use the proper means of preserv-  
ing and fortifying his virtue. All the  
Christian institutions have a direct ten-  
dency to this end. They all serve to  
give warmth to piety, and to add solemn-  
ity to moral virtue. A very high opi-  
nion, indeed, that man must have of his  
own character, who imagines that,  
amidst all the follies and corruptions of  
the world, he stands in need of no assis-  
tance for enabling him to act his part  
with propriety and dignity.

The question is not, whether persons  
of rank and education are to learn any  
thing that is new to them, by frequenting  
the

S E R M. the places of public worship. The  
 XI. great principles of piety and morality  
 are obvious and easily known; and we shall readily admit, that there are many to whom no new instruction is communicated in the house of God. But, my friends, the purpose of your going there is to have known truths recalled to your mind, and their dormant influence awakened; is to have serious meditations suggested; to have good dispositions raised; to have the heart adjusted to a composed and tranquil frame. Is there any man of reason and reflection, who will not acknowledge such effects, as far as they follow from attendance on religious ordinances, to be of the most beneficial nature? These occasional cessations from the cares and anxieties of life, these interruptions to the bustle and the passions of the world, in order to think and hear of eternity, are both a relief and an improvement to the mind. By this retreat from its ordinary circle of thoughts, it is enabled to return, with more clearness  
 and

and more vigour, to the business of the SER M.  
world, after a serious and proper pause. XI.

But I must ask the persons with whom I now reason whether there be no other call to come to God's house, than to hear instruction there? Is not the devout adoration of the God of heaven the principal object of our religious assemblies; and is this what any man of reflection, and of sober mind, dare to make light of? In the temple of the Lord, the rich and the poor, the prince and the peasant, appear as suppliants alike for the protection and favour of the Almighty.— Great and flourishing as thou mayst think thyself, know that thou standest as much in need of that protection, as the meanest of the crowd whom thou beholdest worshipping, with lowly reverence, the God of their fathers. The sun of prosperity shines at present on thy head, and the favourable gale carries thee softly along the stream of life. But the Almighty needs only to give the word, and instantly the tempest shall rise; and thy frail bark shall be driven into the

SERM. ocean, and whelmed in the deep. *In*  
 {<sup>XI.</sup> *my prosperity I said I shall never be moved.*  
*Thou, Lord, didst hide thy face, and I*  
*was troubled.*—Look up, with dread, to  
 that awful hand of providence which is  
 stretched over your heads. Remember  
 the instability of all human things; Re-  
 member it, and tremble, ye who despise  
 the devout acknowledgment of him who  
 disposes of the human fate! *Though ye*  
*live many years and rejoice in them all,*  
*remember the days of darkness; for they*  
*shall be many.\**

But after all that has been urged on  
 this subject, I am sensible it may be  
 objected, that many who make consci-  
 ence of paying strict regard to the insti-  
 tutions of religion, do not appear to  
 have derived much benefit from them.  
 They are not, it will be said, more im-  
 proved in moral conduct, and in the  
 proper discharge of the several duties of  
 life, than others who have been appa-  
 rently negligent of the services of the  
 church. On the contrary, a formal re-  
 gard

\* Eccles. ii. 8.

gard to these appears to be substituted SE R. M.  
by many, in the room of the weightier XI.  
matters of the law.—Though this  
should be admitted, it goes no farther  
than to shew that human weakness, or  
corruption, may defeat the purpose of  
the most promising means of moral im-  
provement. That a superstitious at-  
tention to external worship, has too of-  
ten usurped the character, and supplant-  
ed the place of real virtue, will not be  
denied. Admonitions against so dange-  
rous an error cannot be given too often.  
But because the best things have been  
often misapplied and abused, no argu-  
ment thence arises for their being under-  
valued, and thrown aside. So also rea-  
son, instruction, and discipline of every  
kind, have been frequently perverted to  
bad ends; and yet their intrinsic worth  
and usefulness remain untouched and ac-  
knowledged.—Besides this, it cannot be  
admitted that, because religious institu-  
tions produce not all the good that might  
be wished, and hoped for, they therefore  
do no good at all. This were a rash and

SERMON. ill-founded conclusion. If the morals of  
 XI. men are not always amended by them as  
 they ought to have been, there is reason, however, 'to think that they would have been worse without them. Some check is always given by them to open profligacy. Some assistance is furnished to good dispositions of heart; at least, to decency of manners. Even momentary impressions of seriousness made on the thoughtless by the solemnities of religion, are not without their fruit. They leave generally some trace behind them; and when the traces are often renewed, they may be hoped, through the divine blessing, to form at last a deep impression on the mind.

At the same time, I do not say that religious institutions work upon the mind like a charm; and that mere bodily attendance on them will always ensure us of some profitable effect. Let the means that are employed, for the improvement of rational beings, be ever so powerful in themselves, much of their success will always depend on the manner in which they

they are received and applied. I shall SERM.  
therefore conclude my reasonings on this XI.  
subject, with a few observations con-  
cerning the dispositions requisite on our  
part, for deriving benefit from the pub-  
lic ordinances of religion.

THE ends for which we assemble in the  
house of God are two; to worship God;  
and to listen to religious instructions.

The public worship of God is the chief  
and most sacred purpose of every religi-  
ous assembly of Christians. Let it here  
be remembered, that it is not the utter-  
ing, or the hearing of certain words,  
that constitutes the worship of the Al-  
mighty. It is the heart that praises, or  
prays. If the heart accompany not the  
words that are spoken or heard, we *offer*  
*the sacrifice of fools*. By the inattentive  
thought, and the giddy and wandering  
eye, we profane the temple of the  
Lord, and turn the appearance of de-  
votion into insult and mockery.

With regard to religious instruction,  
attention and reverence are unquestion-  
ably

S E R M. ably due. All religious and moral know-  
XI. ledge comes from God. It is a light  
from heaven, first transmitted to man by  
the original constitution of his nature,  
and afterwards made to shine with fair-  
er and fuller lustre by the revelation of  
the gospel in Jesus Christ. Its bright-  
ness may sometimes be stronger, and  
sometimes weaker, according to the me-  
diums by which it is conveyed. But  
still, as far as the instructions delivered  
from the pulpit are illuminated by the ray  
from heaven, they are the truths of God,  
and ought to be received as such. Re-  
finements of vain philosophy, or intri-  
cate subtilties of theological controver-  
sy, are undoubtedly not entitled to such  
regard. But when the great principles of  
natural or revealed religion are discussed;  
when the important doctrines of the gos-  
pel concerning the life, and sufferings,  
and death of our blessed Redeemer are  
displayed; or useful instructions regard-  
ing the regulation of life, and the pro-  
per discharge of our several duties, are  
the subjects brought into view; it is  
not



not then the human speaker, but the <sup>S E R M.</sup> divine authority that is to be regarded. <sup>XI.</sup>

In the speaker, many imperfections and infirmities may be discovered. The discoveries of the gospel are represented in scripture, as a hidden treasure brought to light; but, by the appointment of God, *we have this treasure in earthen vessels.\** It is not the spirit of curiosity that ought to bring us to church. Too often, it is to be feared, we assemble there merely as critics on the preacher; critics on his sentiments, his language, and his delivery. But, such are not the dispositions which become us on so serious an occasion. It is with humility, with fairness, and candour, with an intention to improve ourselves in piety and virtue, with a view to make personal application to our own character, that we ought to hear the word of God—When we enter the sacred temple, let us ever consider ourselves as creatures surrounded with darkness, seeking illumination from heaven; as guilty creatures imploring forgiveness from our judge; as frail

\* 2 Corinth. 4. 7.

SERM. <sup>XI</sup> frail and moral creatures, preparing for that eternal habitation into which we know not how soon we are to pass.

IF, with such sentiments and impressions, we join in the worship of God, and the ordinances of religion, we may justly hope that they shall be accompanied to us with the divine blessing. It is the express precept of God, *not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together.\* Gather together the people, men, women, and children, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law†. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give unto the Lord the glory due to his name.— Thus hath God commanded, and he never commanded his people to seek his name in vain. For, where two or three are gathered together in his name, our Lord hath told us that he is in the midst of them.‡ God hath said that he loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings*

\*Heb. 10. 25. †Deut. xxxi. 12. ‡Matth. xviii. 20.

*lings of Jacob.\* The prayer of the up-  
right is his delight. Both in their tem-  
poral and spiritual concerns, they, may  
be most expected to prosper, who can  
say with the Psalmist in the text, Lord  
I have loved the habitation of thy house,  
and the place where thine honour dwelleth.*

SERM.  
XI.

\* Psalm lxxxvii. 2.

SERMON

## S E R M O N XII.

On the FASHION of the WORLD passing away.

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I COR. vii. 31:

*—The fashion of this world passeth away.*

SERM. XII. **T**O use this world so as not to abuse it, is one of the most important, and at the same time one of the most difficult lessons which religion teaches. By so many desires and passions we are connected with the objects around us, that our attachment to them is always in hazard of becoming excessive and sinful. hence religion is often employed in moderating this attachment, by rectifying our

our erroneous opinions, and instructing us in the proper value we ought to set on worldly things. Such was particularly the scope of the Apostle in this context. He is putting the Corinthians in mind that their *time is short*; that every thing here is transitory: and therefore, that in all the different occupations of human life, in *weeping* and *rejoicing*, and *buying* and *possessing*, they were ever to keep in view this consideration, that *the fashion of this world passeth away*. The original expression imports, the figure or form under which the world presents itself to us. The meaning is, All that belongs to this visible state is continually changing. Nothing in human affairs is fixed or stable. All is in motion and fluctuation; altering its appearance every moment and passing into some new form. Let us meditate for a little on the serious view which is here given us of the world, in order that we may attend to the improvements which it suggests.

I. *The fashion of the world passeth away*, as the opinions, ideas, and manners

S E R M.  
XII.

SERMONS: *XIII.* manners of men are always changing. We look in vain for a standard to ascertain and fix any of these; in vain expect that what has been approved and established for a while, is always to endure. Principles which were of high authority among our ancestors are now exploded. Systems of philosophy which were once universally received, and taught as infallible truths, are now obliterated and forgotten. Modes of living, behaving, and employing time, the pursuits of the busy, and the entertainments of the gay, have been entirely changed. They were the offspring of fashion, the children of a day. When they had run their course, they expired; and were succeeded by other modes of living, and thinking, and acting, which the gloss of novelty recommended for a while to the public taste.

When we read an account of the manners and occupations, of the studies and opinions even of our own countrymen, in some remote age, we seem to be reading the history of a different world  
from

from what we now inhabit. Coming downwards through some generations, a new face of things appears. Men begin to think, and act, in a different train; and what we call refinement gradually opens. Arriving at our own times, we consider ourselves as having widely enlarged the sphere of knowledge on every side, having formed just ideas on every subject; having attained the proper standard of manners and behaviour; and wonder at the ignorance, the uncouthness, and rusticity of our forefathers. But, alas! what appears to us so perfect shall in its turn pass away. The next race, while they shove us off the stage, will introduce their favourite discoveries and innovations; and what we now admire as the height of improvement, may in a few ages hence be considered as altogether rude and imperfect. As one wave effaces the ridge which the former had made on the sand by the sea shore, so every succeeding age obliterates the opinions and modes of the age which had gone before it. *The fashion*

SERM.  
XII.

SERM. *fashion of the world is ever passing a-*  
 XII. way.

Let us only think of the changes which our own ideas and opinions undergo in the progress of life. One man differs not more from another, than the same man varies from himself in different periods of his age, and in different situations of fortune. In youth, and in opulence, every thing appears smiling and gay. We fly as on the wings of fancy; and survey beauties wherever we cast our eye. But let some more years have passed over our heads, or let disappointments in the world have depressed our spirits; and what a change takes place? The pleasing illusions that once shone before us; the splendid fabrics that imagination had reared; the enchanting maze in which we once wandered with delight, all vanish and are forgotten. The world itself remains the same. But its form, its appearance, and aspect is changed to our view; its *fashion*, as to us, hath *passed away*.

II. WHILE



II. WHILE our opinions and ideas SERM.  
are thus changing within, the condi- XII.  
tion of all external things is, at the same  
time, ever changing without us, and  
around us. Wherever we cast our eyes  
over the face of nature, or the monu-  
ments of art, we discern the marks of  
alteration and vicissitude. We cannot  
travel far upon the earth, without being  
presented with many a striking memo-  
rial of the changes made by time. What  
was once a flourishing city, is now a  
neglected village. Where castles and  
palaces stood, fallen towers and ruined  
walls appear. Where the magnificence  
of the great shone, and the mirth of the  
gay resounded, there, as the prophet  
Isaiah describes, *the owl and the raven  
now dwell, thorns come up, and the nettle  
and the bramble grow in the courts.*—  
When we read the history of nations,  
what do we read but the history of in-  
cessant revolution and change? We be-  
hold kingdoms alternately rising and  
falling; peace and war taking place by  
turns; princes, heroes, and statesmen,  
coming

**SERMON** coming forth in succession on the stage, **KH.** attracting our attention for a little by the splendid figure they make, and then disappearing and forgotten. We see the fashion of the world assuming all its different forms, and in all of them, *passing away.*

But to historical annals there is no occasion for our having recourse. Let any one, who has made some progress in life, recollect only what he has beheld passing before him, in his own time. We have seen our country rise triumphant among the nations; and we have seen it also humbled in its turn. We have seen in one hemisphere of the globe new dominions acquired, and in another hemisphere, our old dominions lost. At home, we have seen factions and parties shift through all their different forms; and administrations, in succession, rise and fall. What were once the great themes of eager discussion, and political contest, are now forgotten. Fathers recount them to their children as the tales of other times. New actors have

have come forth on the stage of the S E R M.  
world. New objects have attracted the XII.  
attention, and new intrigues engaged the  
passions of men. New members fill the  
seats of justice ; new ministers the tem-  
ples of religion ; and a new world, in  
short, in the course of a few years, has  
gradually and insensibly risen around us.

When, from the public scene we turn  
our eye to our own private connections,  
the changes, which have taken place in  
the *fashion of the world*, must touch every  
reflecting mind with a more tender sen-  
sibility. For where are now, many of  
the companions of our early years ; ma-  
ny of those with whom we first began  
the race of life ; and whose hopes and  
prospects were once the same with our  
own ? In recollecting our old acquaint-  
ance and friends, what devastations  
have been made by the hand of time ?  
On the ruins of our former connections,  
new ones have arisen ; new relations  
have been formed ; and the circle of  
those among whom we live is altogether  
Vol. IV. R changed

SERM. changed from what it once was. Comparing our present situation with our former condition of life; looking back to our father's house, and to the scenes of youth; remembering the friends by whom we were trained, and the family in which we grew up; who, but with inward emotion, recollects those days of former years, and is disposed to drop the silent tear, when he views the *fashion of the world thus always passing away!*

III. NOT only our connections with all things around us change, but our own life, through all its stages and conditions, is ever passing away. How just, and how affecting is that image, employed in the sacred writings to describe the state of man, *we spend our years as a tale that is told\**! It is not to any thing great or lasting that human life is compared; not to a monument that is built, or to an inscription that is engraved; not even

\* Psal. xc. 9.

even to a book that is written, or to a SERM.  
history that is recorded; but to a *tale*, XII.  
which is listened to for a little; where  
the words are fugitive and passing, and  
where one incident succeeds and hangs  
on another, till, by insensible transiti-  
ons, we are brought to the close; *a tale*,  
which in some passages may be amusing,  
in others, tedious; but whether it amu-  
ses or fatigues, is soon told, and soon  
forgotten. Thus, year steals upon us  
after year. Life is never standing still  
for a moment; but continually, though  
insensibly, sliding into a new form. In-  
fancy rises up fast to childhood; child-  
hood to youth; youth passes quickly  
into manhood; and the grey hair and  
the faded look are not long of admonish-  
ing us, that old age is at hand. In this  
course all generations run. The world  
is made up of unceasing rounds of tran-  
sitory existence. Some generations are  
coming forward into being, and others  
hastening to leave it. The stream which  
carries us all along, is ever flowing with

SERM. a quick current, though with a still and  
 XII. noiseless course. The dwelling place of  
 man is continually emptying, and by a  
 fresh succession of inhabitants, continually filling anew. *The memory of man passeth away, like the remembrance of a guest who hath tarried but one night.*

As the life of man, considered in its duration, thus fleets and passes away, so during the time it lasts, its condition is perpetually changing. It affords us nothing on which we can set up our rest; no enjoyment or possession which we can properly call our own. When we have begun to be placed in such circumstances as we desired, and wish our lives to proceed in the same agreeable tenor, how often comes some unexpected event across, to disconcert all our schemes of happiness? Our health declines; our friends die; our families are scattered; something or other is not long of occurring, to shew us that the wheel must turn round; *the fashion of the world must pass away.* Is there any man who dares to look to futurity with

an

an eye of confident hope; and to say, S E R M.  
that against a year hence, he can pro- XII.  
mise being in the same condition of  
health or fortune, as he is at present?  
The seeds of change are every where  
sown in our state; and the very causes  
that seemed to promise us security, are  
often secretly undermining it. Great  
fame provokes the attacks of envy and  
reproach. High health gives occasion  
to intemperance and disease. The ele-  
vation of the mighty never fails to ren-  
der their condition tottering; and that  
obscurity which shelters the mean, ex-  
poses them, at the same time, to be-  
come the prey of oppression. So com-  
pletely is the *fashion of this world* made  
by Providence for change, and prepared  
for *passing away*. In the midst of this  
instability, it were some comfort, did  
human prosperity decay as slowly as it  
rises. By slow degrees, and by many  
intervening steps, it rises. But one  
day is sufficient to scatter, and bring it  
to nought. I might add,

IV. THAT

SERM. <sup>XII.</sup> IV. THAT the world itself in which we dwell, the basis of all our present enjoyments, is itself contrived for change, and designed to pass away. While the generations of men come forth in their turns, like troops of succeeding pilgrims, to act their part on this globe, the globe on which they act is tottering under their feet. It was once overflowed by a deluge. It is shaken by earthquakes; it is undermined by subterraneous fires; it carries many a mark of having suffered violent convulsions, and of tending to dissolution. Revelation informs us, that there is a day approaching, in which *the heavens shall pass away with a great noise; the elements shall melt with fervent heat; and the earth and the works therein shall be burnt up.* When this destined hour arrives, the *fashion of the world* shall have finally *past away.* Immortal spirits shall then look back upon this world, as we do at present on cities and empires, which were once mighty and flourishing, but now are swept



swept from existence, and their place  
is no more to be found. S E R M.  
XII.

I SHALL insist no longer on this representation of things. Enough has been said, to show that the *fashion of the world*, in every sense, *passes* away. Opinions and manners, public affairs and private concerns, the life of man, the conditions of fortune, and the earth itself on which we dwell, are all changing around us.—Is every thing, then, with which we are connected, passing and transitory? Is the whole state of man no more than a dream or fleeting vision? Is he brought forth, to be only the child of a day? Are we thrown into a river, where all flows, and nothing stays; where we have no means of resisting the current; nor can reach any firm ground, on which to rest our foot?—No, my brethren; man was not doomed to be so unhappy; nor made by his Creator so much in vain. There are three fixed and permanent objects, to which I must now call your attention,

SERM. tion, as the great supports of human  
 XII. constancy amidst this fugitive state.  
 Though this world changes and passes  
 away, virtue and goodness never change;  
 God never changes; heaven and im-  
 mortality pass not away.

*First*, VIRTUE and goodness never  
 change. Let opinions and manners, con-  
 ditions and situations, in public and in  
 private life, alter as they will, virtue is  
 ever the same. It rests on the immove-  
 able basis of Eternal Truth. Among all  
 the revolutions of human things it  
 maintains its ground; ever possessing the  
 veneration and esteem of mankind, and  
 conferring on the heart, which enjoys  
 it, satisfaction and peace. Consult the  
 most remote antiquity. Look to the  
 most savage nations of the earth. How  
 wild, and how fluctuating soever the  
 ideas of men may have been, this opi-  
 nion you will find to have always pre-  
 vailed, that probity, truth, and benefi-  
 cence, form the honour and the excel-  
 lency of man. In this, the philosopher  
 and

and the savage, the warrior and the hermit, join. At this altar all have worshipped. Their offerings may have been unseemly. Their notions of virtue may have been rude, and occasionally tainted by ignorance and superstition; but the fundamental ideas of moral worth have ever remained the same.

Here then is one point of stability, affected by no vicissitudes of time and life, on which we may rest. Our fortunes may change, and our friends may die; but virtue may still be our own; and as long as this remains, we are never miserable. *Till I die I will not remove my integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go. My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.\** He who, with the holy man of old, can hold this language, may with undisturbed mind survey time flying away, life decaying, and the whole fashion of the world changing around him. He hath within himself, a source of consolation and hope, independent of all

\* Job xxvii. 5, 6.

S E R M all earthly objects. Every terrestrial  
 XII. glory sparkles only for a little, with  
 transient brightness. But virtue shines  
 with eternal and unalterable splendour.  
 It derives its origin from heaven ; and  
 partakes both of the lustre, and the sta-  
 bility, of celestial objects. *It is the  
 brightness of the everlasting light ; the  
 unspotted mirror of God, and the image of  
 his goodness.*

IN the *second* place, God never chan-  
 ges. Amidst the unceasing vicissitude  
 of earthly things, there remains at the  
 head of the universe an eternal protec-  
 tor of virtue, whose *throne is established  
 for ever*. With him there is *no vari-  
 ableness, neither any shadow of turning* ;  
 no inconstancy of purpose, and no de-  
 cay of wisdom or of power. We know  
 that he loved righteousness from the be-  
 ginning of days, and that he will con-  
 tinue to love it unalterably to the last.  
 Foreseen by him was every revolution  
 which the course of ages has produced.  
 All the changes which happen in the  
 state

state of nature, or the life of men, were comprehended in his decree. How much soever worldly things may change in themselves, they are all united in his plan; they constitute one great system or whole, of which he is the author; and which, at its final completion, shall appear to be perfect. His dominion holds together, in a continued chain, the successive variety of human events; gives stability to things that in themselves are fluctuating; gives constancy even to the *fashion of the world* while it is *passing away*. Wherefore, though all things change on earth, and we ourselves be involved in the general mutability, yet as long as, with trust and hope, we look up to this Supreme Being, we rest on the *rock of ages*, and are safe amidst every change. We possess a fortress to which we can have recourse in all dangers; a refuge under all storms; a dwelling place in all generations.

IN the *third* and last place, Heaven and immortality pass not away. The  
fleeing

S E R M.  
XII.

SERM. XII. fleeting scenes of this life are to be considered as no more than an introduction to a nobler and more permanent order of things, when man shall have attained the maturity of his being. This is what reason gave some ground to expect; what revelation has fully confirmed; and in confirming it, has agreed with the sentiments and anticipation of the good and wise in every age. We are taught to believe, that what we now behold, is only the first stage of the life of man. We are arrived no farther than the threshold; we dwell as in the outer courts of existence. Here, tents only are pitched; tabernacles erected for the sojourners of a day. But in the region of eternity, all is great, stable, and unchanging. There the mansions of the just are prepared: there, the city which hath foundations is built; there is established, the kingdom which cannot be moved. Here, every thing is in stir and fluctuation; because here good men continue not, but pass onward in the course of being. There all is serene, steady

steady and orderly; because there remaineth the final *rest of the people of God.* SERM.  
XII.

Here, all is corrupted by our folly and guilt; and of course must be transient and vain. But there, purchased by the death, and secured by the resurrection of the son of God, is an *inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.* There reigns that tranquillity which is never troubled. There shines that sun which never sets. There flows that river of pleasures, which is always unruffled and pure. Looking forward to those divine habitations, the changes of the present world disappear to the eye of faith; and a good man becomes ashamed of suffering himself to be dejected by what is so soon to pass away.

SUCH are the objects you ought to oppose to the transient *fashion of the world*; Virtue, and God, and Heaven. Fixing your regard on these, you will have no reason to complain of the lot of man, or the world's mutability.—The design of the preceding representation  
which

S E R M. which I gave of the world, was not to  
 XII. indulge vain declamation ; to raise fruit-  
 less melancholy ; or to throw an unne-  
 cessary cloud over human life. But to  
 show the moderation requisite in our at-  
 tachment to the world ; and at the same  
 time to point out the higher objects  
 both of attention and consolation which  
 religion affords.——Passing and chang-  
 able as all human things are, among  
 them, however, we must at present act  
 our part ; to them we must return from  
 religious meditation. They are not be-  
 low the regard of any Christian ; for  
 they form the scene which Providence  
 has appointed at present for his activi-  
 ty, and his duty. Trials and dangers  
 they may often present to him ; but  
 amidst these he will safely hold his  
 course, if, when engaged in worldly af-  
 fairs, he keep in view those divine ob-  
 jects which I have been setting before  
 him. Let him ever retain connection  
 with Virtue, and God, and Heaven.  
 By them let his conduct be regulated,  
 and his constancy supported. So shall  
 he



he use this world without abusing it. He shall neither droop under its misfortunes, nor be vainly elated by its advantages; but through all its changes shall carry an equal and steady mind; and in the end shall receive the accomplishment of the promise of scripture, that though *the world passeth away, and the lust thereof, he that doth the will of God shall abide for ever.\**

\* 1 John ii. 17.

SERMON

## SERMON XIII.

### ON TRANQUILLITY of MIND.

PSALM XV. 5.

*— He that doth these things shall never  
be moved.*

**SERM.**  
**XIII.** **T**RANQUILLITY of mind, or,  
in the words of the text, a mind *not  
moved* or disquieted by the accidents of  
life, is undoubtedly one of the greatest  
blessings that we can possess on earth.  
It is here mentioned as the reward of the  
man, whose character had been described  
in this psalm, as leading a virtuous life,  
and discharging his duty towards God  
and

and his neighbour. It is indeed the ultimate aim, to which the wishes of the wife and reflecting have ever been directed, that with a mind undisturbed by anxieties, cares, and fears, they might pass their days in a pleasing serenity. They justly concluded that, by enjoying themselves in peace, they would enjoy, to the greatest advantage, all the comforts of life that came within their reach.

S E R M.  
XIII.

This happy tranquillity, the multitude conceive to be most readily attainable by means of wealth, or, at least, of an easy fortune; which they imagine would set them above all the ordinary disturbances of life. That it has some effect for this purpose, cannot be denied. Poverty and straitened circumstances, are often inconsistent with tranquillity. To be destitute of those conveniencies that suit our rank in the world; to be burdened with anxiety about making provision for every day which passes over our head; instead of bringing comfort to a family who look up to us for, aid, to behold ourselves sur-

S E R M. rounded with their wants and complaints,  
 XIII. are circumstances which cannot fail to give much uneasiness to every feeling mind. To take measures, therefore, for attaining a competent fortune, by laudable means, is wise and proper. Entire negligence of our affairs, and indifference about our worldly circumstances, is, for the most part, the consequence of some vice, or some folly.—At the same time, I must observe, that the attainment of opulence is no certain method of attaining tranquillity. Embarrassments and vexations often attend it; and long experience has shown, that tranquillity is far from being always found among the rich. Nay, the higher that men rise in the world, the greater degrees of power and distinction which they acquire, they are often the farther removed from internal peace. The world affords so many instances of miseries abounding in the higher ranks of life, that it were needless to enlarge on a topic so generally known and admitted.

Assuming

Assuming it, therefore, for an un-<sup>S E R M.</sup>  
 doubted truth, that the mere possession <sup>XIII.</sup>  
 of the goods of fortune may be consist-  
 ent with the want of inward tranquilli-  
 ty, we must look around for other more  
 certain grounds of it. We must enquire  
 whether any line of conduct can be  
 pointed out, which, independent of ex-  
 ternal situation in the world, shall tend  
 to make us easy in mind; shall either  
 bestow, or aid, that tranquillity which  
 all men desire. The remaining part of  
 this discourse shall be employed in sug-  
 gesting, with great plainness of speech,  
 such directions as appear to me the most  
 material on this important subject.

THE *first* direction, which I have to  
 suggest, is, that we imitate the character  
 of the man who is described in this psalm  
*as walking uprightly, working righteousness,*  
*and speaking the truth, as he thinketh in his*  
*heart*; that we study to preserve a clear  
 conscience, and to lead a virtuous and ho-  
 nourable, at least an inoffensive and in-  
 nocent, life. Of such a man only it can

S E R M. be said, that *doing these things he shall never be moved.* So great is the power of conscience over every human being, that the remembrance of crimes never fails to overthrow tranquillity of mind. Be assured, that he who defrauds his neighbour, who has ensnared the innocent, has violated his trust, or betrayed his friend, shall never enjoy within himself undisturbed quiet. His evil deeds will at times recur to his thoughts, like ghosts rising up in black array before him to haunt his couch. Even the sense of a foolish and trifling conduct, of a life past in idleness and dissipation; by which, though a man has not been guilty of great crimes, he has however wasted his substance, mispent his time, and brought upon himself just reproach; even this, I say, is sufficient to create much uneasiness and disquiet to the heart. Let him, therefore, who wishes to enjoy tranquillity, study above all things, to act an irreproachable part. With comfort he will rest his head on his pillow at night, when he is conscious that throughout

out the day he has been doing his duty <sup>S. R. M.</sup> towards God and man; when none of <sup>XIII.</sup> the transactions of that day come back, in painful remembrance, to upbraid him. To this testimony of a good conscience, let him be able,

IN the *second* place, to join humble trust in the favour of God. As, after the best endeavours we can use, no man's behaviour will be entirely faultless, it is essential to peace of mind, that we have some ground for hope in the Divine mercy, that, through the merits of Jesus Christ, our defects shall be forgiven, and grace be shewn us by Heaven. This includes all the duties of faith and repentance that are required by the Gospel; the faithful discharge of which duties is absolutely necessary for delivering us from those fears of another world, which, if not allayed, are sufficient to banish all tranquillity from the heart. Our religious principles must at the same time be sound and pure; and carefully preserved from the taint

S E R M. taint of superstition, whose gloomy horrors, taking possession of weak and ill-informed minds, convert what they mistake for religion, into a source of misery.—Moreover, it is necessary, that we be able to place trust in God, not only as our future Judge, but as the present Governor of human affairs. So uncertain is the continuance of every earthly comfort, that he, who reposes no confidence in the Supreme Disposer of events, must be often disquieted and dejected. He alone possesses firm tranquillity, who, amidst all human vicissitudes, looks up, with settled trust, to an almighty Ruler, as to one under whose conduct he is safe. To him alone belongs that happy privilege, described by the Psalmist. *He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed; trusting in the Lord†.*

I have pointed out the primary and essential foundations of tranquillity; virtuous conduct, good principles, and pious dispositions. At the same time, a man  
may



may be both pious and virtuous, and yet, through some defects in the management of his mind and temper, may not possess that happy serenity and self-enjoyment, which ought to be the portion of virtue and piety. Instances of this will occur to every one who is acquainted with the world. We too often behold persons, whose principles, and whose moral conduct, are in the main unexceptionable, leading an uncomfortable life; through fretfulness of temper, peevishness of manners, or sullenness of disposition. There is, therefore, some discipline to be studied; there are some subsidiary parts of character to be attended to, in order to give piety and virtue their full effect for conferring tranquillity. To the consideration of these secondary means I now proceed. Let me then advise you,

S E R M.  
XIII.

In the *third* place, to attend to the culture and improvement of your minds. A fund of useful knowledge, and a stock  
of

S E R M. of ideas, afford much advantage for the  
 XIII. enjoyment of tranquillity. I do not mean, that every man must study to become deeply learned. The situation of many would not allow it. The taste, and the habits of others, prevent it. But what I mean is, that every man who wishes to lead a comfortable life should provide for himself, as much as he can, by means of observation, reading, and reflecting, a large field of useful thoughts. In a mind absolutely vacant, tranquillity is seldom found. The vacancy too often will be filled up by bad desires and passions. Whereas the mind of a wise man is a kingdom to itself. In his lonely, or melancholy hours, he finds always resources within himself, to which he can turn for relief. As there are many occasions when external objects afford no pleasure, it is only by being able to rest on the entertainments afforded to himself by his mind, that any one can pass his days with self-enjoyment. Let me recommend for the same purpose,

IN

IN the *fourth* place, that we be always careful to provide proper employment for our time. Regular industry and labour, with intervals of ease, is perhaps the state most conducive of any to tranquillity. If our station give no call to industry, it will be profitable that we study to have some end or object in view, to which our attention shall be directed. Relaxation from intense, or incessant pursuit, is requisite for comfort. But if relaxation degenerate into total idleness, it becomes in a high degree adverse to tranquillity. Every man by his nature, is formed, more or less, for action. In a mind that is entirely quiescent, and that has no object to put it into motion, instead of self-enjoyment, there will be constant languor, tediousness, and misery. Life stagnates in such a situation, like a pool of dead waters; and the man becomes a burden to himself. Violent and dangerous pursuits, which distract and embroil those who are engaged in them, I cannot be understood to recommend. Every one sees how foreign

S E R M.  
XIII.

S E R M. reign these are to a state of tranquillity.

XIII.

But in the ordinary tenor of calm and easy life, I would advise every one to have some end before him; some object which shall bring the mind into action, and fill up the vacuities of time. Provided the object be innocent, and of no unsuitable or degrading nature, it may answer this purpose, though it should not be in itself of high importance. It is better for the mind to have some determinate direction given it, than to be always left floating, as it were, in empty space.—But about whatever objects we are employed, it is still more material to tranquillity that, in the

*Fifth* place, we learn to govern our passions. These are the most frequent disturbers of our peace. Necessary as their impulse is to give activity to the mind, yet if they are not kept in subordination to reason, they speedily throw all things into confusion. Such of them as belong to the malignant and unsocial class, evidently tend to produce vexation and disquiet. Against suffering these to  
gain

gain possession of the heart, admonition S E R M.  
is scarcely necessary. But I must ad- XIII.  
monish you, that even those which are  
accounted of innocent nature, and which  
therefore may lay hold of virtuous  
minds, if they obtain the entire mastery,  
are sufficient to overthrow the tranquil-  
lity of life. Let every one, therefore,  
who values that tranquillity, study to  
retain moderation and self-command,  
even in the midst of passions which have  
a fair and bland appearance. He will  
find that the gratification of any one of  
them, compensates not that perpetual  
slavery to which it will reduce him,  
when it becomes inordinate.

I have farther to admonish you, that  
this self-command is particularly neces-  
sary in all that relates to habitual temper.  
Even where strong passions are out of  
the question, those slighter emotions  
which ruffle or sour the temper, are suf-  
ficient, by their frequent recurrence, to  
poison all self-enjoyment. He who  
would possess a tranquil state, must,  
above all things, cultivate calmness and  
gentleness

S E R M. gentleness of disposition. He ought  
 XIII. especially to cultivate it in that society,  
 whether domestic or social, with which  
 he has most frequent intercourse. We  
 all know, that there are thousands who  
 in public, and in formal companies, ap-  
 pear to be all gentleness and sweetness,  
 but who, at home, and among their  
 nearest relations, give vent, with free-  
 dom, to the most harsh and peevish dis-  
 positions. Such persons are not likely  
 to enjoy much real comfort. For it is  
 in the daily and familiar intercourse of  
 life, that temper chiefly exerts its power,  
 either for promoting or for disturbing,  
 the tranquillity of our days. On oc-  
 casions when men come closest together,  
 if, instead of meeting in smooth contact,  
 they rub and grate on one another, the  
 feelings produced on both sides are of the  
 most offensive and displeasing kind.  
 Nothing can be assumed as a more cer-  
 tain axiom, than that he who allows  
 either inordinate passions, or a cross  
 temper, to govern him, must, though  
 he should possess all that flourish-  
 ing

ing fortune can bestow, be a stranger to S E R M.  
tranquillity. XIII.

In the *sixth* place, let me advise you never to expect too much from the world. High hopes, and florid views, are great enemies to tranquillity. When rashly indulged, they are constantly producing disappointments. Their indulgence, in the mean time, occasions discontent with our present situation; and he who is discontented cannot be happy. One of the first lessons, both of religion and of wisdom, is, to moderate our expectations and hopes; and not to set forth on the voyage of life like men who expect to be always carried forward with a favourable gale. Let your views be suited to your rank and station in the world; and never soar fantastically beyond them. Content yourselves with sober pleasures, and form your relish to them. Be thankful when you are free from pain, though you be not in the midst of high enjoyment. Be satisfied if the path you tread be easy and smooth, though it be  
not

*On Tranquillity of Mind.*

ewed with flowers. Human life is not of continued pleasure; nor is it always rendered happy by great exertion. Remember, that it is a mid-region which is the native station of tranquillity. It neither aspires to those heights of the atmosphere where the thunder is formed; nor creeps always on the ground. Affect not, on every occasion, to put yourselves forward. Be content to retire sometimes into the shade; and allow others to take their proper place.—It will be easily seen, that I speak not now to the ambitious and aspiring; but to those who value tranquillity more than splendid appearance in the world.

Such persons I also advise, while they expect not too much from the world, neither, also, to form too high expectations from the characters of those on whose friendship they rest, and with whom it is their lot to be connected, either in social or domestic relations. If you have looked for perfection any where, you will find yourself disappointed; and  
the



the consequence of this disappointment S E R M.  
XIII. will be, that friendship will cool, and disgust succeed. If you wish to enjoy comfort in any of your connections, take your fellow-creatures as they are, and look for their imperfections to appear. You know you have your own; bear with those of others, as you expect that they are to bear with you. As no one is without his failings, few also are void of amiable qualities. Select for your companions, those who have the greatest share of such qualities; and value them accordingly.—In a word, make the best of this world as you find it. Reckon both on the state of human life, and on the society of men, as mixed, and chequered with good and evil. Carrying always in your eye such views of things, you will be best formed to those equal spirits, and that reasonable disposition of mind, which make the basis of tranquillity. I shall only add as my

*Seventh*, and last advice on the subject;  
to

S E R M. to mix retreat with the active business  
 XIII. of the world, and to cultivate habits of  
 serious thought and recollection. I before  
 advised those who are not particularly  
 engaged in active life, to form to them-  
 selves some object of pursuit, in order to  
 furnish proper employment to time and  
 thought. But the great multitude of  
 men are in a different situation. Indus-  
 try is required of them; business and  
 cares press; and active pursuits occupy  
 their closest attention. He, who, in  
 this situation, pours himself forth incef-  
 santly on the world, cannot escape par-  
 taking much of its disturbance and trou-  
 ble. Amidst bustle, intrigue, and dif-  
 fension, he must pass many an uneasy  
 hour. Here an enemy encounters him;  
 there, a rival meets him. A suspicious  
 friend alarms him one hour; an ungrate-  
 ful one provokes him the next. I do not  
 recommend; that for these reasons, he  
 who studies tranquillity should retire  
 from all public business, and forsake  
 the haunts of men. This were the  
 retreat of a monk, not of a good and a  
 wife

wife man. Tranquillity were too dearly purchased by the neglect of those duties which belong to a man, and a Christian. Nor indeed in absolute seclusion from the world is tranquillity ever found. On the contrary, when the human mind is cut off from those employments for which it was designed by nature and Providence, it preys on itself, and engenders its own misery. Tranquillity is always most likely to be attained, when the business of the world is tempered with thoughtful and serious retreat. *Commune with your hearts on your bed, and be still.* Leaving this world to itself, let there be seasons which you devote to yourselves, and to God. Reflection and meditation allay the workings of many unquiet passions; and place us at a distance from the tumults of the world. When the mind has either been ruffled or cast down, in intercourse with God and heaven we find a sanctuary to which we can retreat. In the hours of contemplation and devotion, a good man enjoys himself in

SERM.  
XIII.

**SERM.** peace. He beholds nobler objects than  
**XIII.** what worldly men can behold. He assumes a higher character. He listens to the voice of nature and of God; and from this holy sanctuary comes forth with a mind fortified against the little disturbances of the world. Such habits, therefore, cannot be too much recommended to the lovers of tranquillity, as powerful subsidiary means for attaining that happy state.

I HAVE thus pointed out what appears to me the discipline of religion and wisdom for tranquillity of mind. *He that doth these things shall never be moved.*— During the early periods of life, vivid sensations of pleasure are the sole objects thought worthy of pursuit. Mere ease and calmness are despised, as the portion of the aged only and the feeble. Some longer acquaintance with the world, with its disappointed hopes and fallacious pleasures, teaches almost all men, by degrees, to wish for tranquillity and peace. But you must not imagine, that these

these are blessings which will drop on S.E.R.M.  
men of their own accord, as soon as they XIII.  
begin to desire them. No: The thought-  
less, and the profligate, will ever remain  
strangers to them. They will remain  
the sport of every accident that occurs  
to derange their minds, and to disturb  
their life.—The three great enemies  
to tranquillity are, Vice, Superstition,  
and Idleness: Vice, which poisons and  
disturbs the mind with bad passions;  
Superstition, which fills it with ima-  
ginary terrors; Idleness, which loads it  
with tediousness and disgust. It is only  
by following the path which Eternal  
Wisdom has pointed out, that we can  
arrive at the blessed temple of Tran-  
quillity, and obtain a station there: By  
doing, or at least endeavouring to do,  
our duty to God and man; by acquir-  
ing an humble trust in the mercy and  
favour of God through Jesus Christ;  
by cultivating our minds, and properly  
employing our time and thoughts; by  
governing our passions and our temper;  
by correcting all unreasonable expecta-

SERM. tions from the world, and from men;  
 XIII. and in the midst of worldly business,  
 habituating ourselves to calm retreat  
 and serious recollection.—By such  
 means as these, it may be hoped, that,  
 through the divine blessing, our days  
 shall flow in a stream as unruffled as the  
 human state admits. *The wicked are  
 like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest.  
 But the work of righteousness is peace;  
 and the effect of righteousness is quietness  
 and assurance for ever\**

\* Isaiah xxxii. 17.

## S E R M O N XIV.

On the MISFORTUNES of MEN being  
chargeable on themselves.

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PROVERBS xix. 3.

*The foolishness of man perverteth his way,  
and his heart fretteth against the Lord.*

**H**OW many complaints do we hear S E R M. XIV.  
from every quarter, of the misery  
and distress that fill the world ! In these  
the high and the low, the young and  
the aged, join ; and since the beginning  
of time, no topic has been more fertile  
of declamation, than the vanity and  
vexation which man is appointed to suf-  
fer. But are we certain that this vex-  
ation,

SERM. ation, and this vanity, is altogether to  
 XIV. be ascribed to the appointment of Heaven? Is there no ground to suspect that man himself is the chief and immediate author of his own sufferings? What the text plainly suggests is, that it is common for men to complain groundlessly of Providence; that they are prone to accuse God for the evils of life, when in reason they ought to accuse themselves; and that after their *foolishness* hath *perverted their way*, and made them undergo the consequences of their own misconduct, they impiously *fret in heart against the Lord*. This is the doctrine which I now purpose to illustrate, in order to silence the sceptic, and to check a repining and irreligious spirit. I shall for this end make some observations, first, on the external, and next, upon the internal, condition of man; and then conclude with such serious and useful improvement as the subject will naturally suggest,

I. LET us consider the external condition



dition of man. We find him placed in SERME  
a world, where he has by no means the XIV.  
disposal of the events that happen. Calamities sometimes befall the worthiest and the best, which it is not in their power to prevent, and where nothing is left them, but to acknowledge and to submit to the high hand of Heaven. For such visitations of trial, many good and wise reasons can be assigned, which the present subject leads me not to discuss. But though those unavoidable calamities make a part, yet they make not the chief part of the vexations and sorrows that distress human life. A multitude of evils beset us; for the source of which we must look to another quarter.—No sooner has any thing in the health, or in the circumstances of men, gone cross to their wish, than they begin to talk of the unequal distribution of the good things of this life; they envy the condition of others; they repine at their own lot, and fret against the Ruler of the world.

Full of these sentiments, one man  
pines

§ E R M. pines under a broken constitution. But  
 XIV. let us ask him, whether he can, fairly  
 and honestly, assign no cause for this  
 but the unknown decree of Heaven? Has he  
 duly valued the blessing of health, and always  
 observed the rules of virtue and sobriety? Has  
 he been moderate in his life, and temperate in  
 all his pleasures? If now he be only paying  
 the price of his former, perhaps his forgotten,  
 indulgences, has he any title to complain,  
 as if he were suffering unjustly? Were you  
 to survey the chambers of sickness and distress,  
 you would find them peopled with the victims  
 of intemperance and sensuality, and with the  
 children of vitious indolence and sloth. Among  
 the thousands who languish there, you would  
 find the proportion of innocent sufferers to be  
 small. You would see faded youth, premature  
 old age, and the prospect of an untimely grave,  
 to be the portion of multitudes who, in one  
 way or other, have brought those evils on  
 themselves; while yet these martyrs of vice  
 and folly

ly have the assurance to arraign the hard fate of man, and to *fret against the Lord*, S E R M.  
XIV.

But you, perhaps, complain of hardships of another kind; of the injustice of the world; of the poverty which you suffer, and the discouragements under which you labour; of the crosses and disappointments of which your life has been doomed to be full.—Before you give too much scope to your discontent, let me desire you to reflect impartially upon your past train of life. Have not sloth, or pride, or ill temper, or sinful passions, misled you often from the path of sound and wise conduct? Have you not been wanting to yourselves in improving those opportunities which Providence offered you, for bettering and advancing your state? If you have chosen to indulge your humour, or your taste, in the gratifications of indolence or pleasure, can you complain because others, in preference to you, have obtained those advantages which naturally belong to useful labours, and honourable pursuits? Have not the consequences

SERMON. sequences of some false steps, into which  
 XIV. your passions, or your pleasures, have betrayed you, pursued you through much of your life; tainted, perhaps, your character, involved you in embarrassments, or sunk you into neglect? — It is an old saying, that every man is the artificer of his own fortune in the world. It is certain that the world seldom turns wholly against a man, unless through his own fault. *Godliness is, in general, profitable unto all things.* Virtue, diligence and industry, joined with good temper and prudence, have ever been found the surest road to prosperity; and where men fail of attaining it, their want of success is far oftener owing to their having deviated from that road, than to their having encountered insuperable bars in it. Some, by being too artful, forfeit the reputation of probity. Some, by being too open, are accounted to fail in prudence. Others, by being fickle and changeable, are distrusted by all. — The case commonly is, that men seek to ascribe their disappointments

appointments to any cause, rather than S E R M.  
to their own misconduct; and when XIV.  
they can devise no other cause, they lay  
them to the charge of Providence.  
Their folly leads them into vices; their  
vices into misfortunes; and in their mis-  
fortunes they *fret against the Lord*. They  
are doubly unjust towards God. In their  
prosperity, they are apt to ascribe their  
success to their own diligence, rather  
than to God's blessing; and in their  
adversity, they impute their distresses  
to his providence, not to their own  
misbehaviour. Whereas, the truth is  
the very reverse of this. *Every good  
and every perfect gift cometh from above*;  
and of evil and misery, man is the au-  
thor to himself.

When from the condition of indivi-  
duals, we look abroad to the public  
state of the world, we meet with more  
proofs of the truth of this assertion.  
We see great societies of men torn in  
pieces by intestine dissensions, tumults  
and civil commotions. We see mighty  
armies going forth, in formidable ar-  
ray

SERM. ray, against each other, to cover the  
 XIV. earth with blood, and to fill the air  
 with the cries of widows and orphans. Sad evils these are, to which this miserable world is exposed.—But are these evils, I beseech you, to be imputed to God? Was it he who sent forth slaughtering armies into the field, or who filled the peaceful city with massacres and blood? Are these miseries any other than the bitter fruit of men's violent and disorderly passions? Are they not clearly to be traced to the ambition and vices of princes, to the quarrels of the great, and to the turbulence of the people?—Let us lay them entirely out of the account, in thinking of Providence; and let us think only of the *foolishness of men*. Did man controul his passions, and form his conduct according to the dictates of wisdom, humanity and virtue, the earth would no longer be desolated by cruelty; and human societies would live in order, harmony and peace. In those scenes of mischief and violence which fill the  
 world,

world, let man behold, with shame, the picture of his vices, his ignorance, and folly. Let him be humbled by the mortifying view of his own *perverse*ness; but let not *his heart fret against the Lord*.—From the external condition, let us proceed,

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II. To consider the internal state of man. It is certain that much disquiet and misery may be found there, although his outward condition appear undisturbed, and easy. As far as this inward disquietude arises from the stings of conscience, and the horrors of guilt, there can be no doubt of its being self-created misery; which it is altogether impossible to impute to Heaven. But, even, when great crimes, and deep remorse, are not the occasions of torment, how often is poison infused into the most flourishing conditions of fortune, by the follies and the passions of the prosperous? We see them peevish and restless; corrupted with luxury, and enervated by ease; impatient of the smallest disappointment;

SERM. disappointment; oppressed with low  
 XIV. spirits, and complaining of every thing  
 around them. How many *Hamans*,  
*Hazaels*, and *Herods*, are there in the  
 world, who, from what they suffer  
 within, pass their days in more vexati-  
 on and misery, than they who undergo  
 the hardships of poverty? Dare such  
 men, in their most discontented mo-  
 ments, charge the providence of Hea-  
 ven with miseries of their own procur-  
 ing? Providence had put into their  
 hands the fairest opportunity of passing  
 their life with comfort. But they them-  
 selves blasted every comfort that was  
 offered; and verified the prediction, that  
*the prosperity of fools shall destroy  
 them.\**

As it is man's own *foolishness* which  
 ruins his prosperity, we must not omit to  
 remark, that it is the same cause which  
 aggravates and embitters his adversity.  
 That you suffer from the external af-  
 flictions

\* Prov. i. 32.



fictions of the world, may often be owing to God's appointment; but when, in the midst of these, you also suffer from the disorders of your mind and passions, this is owing to yourselves; and they are those inward disorders which add the severest sting to external afflictions. Many are the resources of a good and a wise man, under all the disasters of life. In the midst of them, it is always in his power to enjoy peace of mind, and hope in God. He may suffer; but under suffering he will not sink, as long as all is sound within. But when the spirit has been wounded by guilt and folly, its wounds open, and bleed afresh, upon every blow that is received from the world. The mind becomes sensible and sore to the slightest injuries of fortune; and a small reverse is felt as an insupportable calamity.

On the whole; the farther you search into human life, and the more you observe the manners and the conduct of men, you will be the more convinced of this great truth, that of the distresses which

S E R M.  
XIV.

SERM. which abound in the world, we are the  
 XIV. chief authors. Among the multitudes  
 who are, at this day, bewailing their  
 condition and lot, it will be found to  
 hold of far the greater part, that they are  
 reaping the *fruit of their own doings*;  
*their iniquities are reproving them, and*  
*their backslidings correcting them.* Unat-  
 tainable objects foolishly pursued, in-  
 temperate passions nourished, vicious  
 pleasures and desires indulged, God and  
 God's holy laws forgotten; these, these  
 are the great scourges of the world; the  
 great causes of the life of man being so  
 embroiled and unhappy. God hath or-  
 dained our state on earth to be a mixed  
 and imperfect state. We have ourselves  
 to blame for its becoming an insupport-  
 able one. If it bring forth nothing to  
 us but vexation and vanity, we have  
 sown the seeds of that vanity and vex-  
 ation; and as we have sown, we must  
 reap.—I now proceed to make im-  
 provement of those truths which we  
 have been considering.

IN the *first* place, let us be taught, to  
 look

look upon sin as the source of all our S E R M. <sup>XIV.</sup> miseries. It may sometimes assume the gentler names of folly, irregularity, or levity; but under whatever form it appears, it always imports a deviation from that sacred law which ought to regulate our conduct. It is still the *root that beareth gall and wormwood\**; and in exact proportion to the quantity of this poisonous weed, which we ourselves have infused into our cup, we must expect to drink the waters of bitterness. If the *foolishness of man* did not *pervert his ways*, his heart would have no occasion to *fret against the Lord*. He would enjoy competent satisfaction in every situation of life; and under its unavoidable evils, would derive consolation from religion and virtue.—Indeed, of every evil which we now endure, of those evils which we look upon to be the appointment of providence, as well as of others, sin is ultimately the cause; as it was man's revolt from God,

VOL. IV.            U            which

\* Deut. xxix. 18.

S E R M. which gave rise originally to those evils,  
 XI V. and which rendered the chastisements  
 we undergo, in this state of discipline,  
 necessary, even for the *sons of God*.——  
 But at present, we confine our observation  
 to those miseries of which men are the  
 immediate procurers to themselves; and  
 from them alone, we find sufficient  
 reason to consider sin as the capital foe  
 to man; as the great troubler and dis-  
 turber of his life. To Providence, then,  
 let us look up with reverence. On sin let  
 our indignation be vented; and, what is  
 of more consequence, against sin and all  
 its approaches, let our utmost caution be  
 employed. As we proceed through the  
 different paths of life, let us accustom  
 ourselves to beware of sin, as the hidden  
 snake lurking among the grass, from  
 whose fatal touch we must fly in haste,  
 if we would not experience its sting.  
 ——Too many have no just apprehen-  
 sions of this danger. *Fools*, said the wise  
 man, *make a mock at sin*. A fool  
 indeed he must be, who dares to think  
 lightly of it. He shows not only the de-  
 pravity

pravity of his heart, but, what perhaps S E R M. XIV. he will be more ashamed to be charged with, he shows his ignorance of the world. He shows that he knows not, he understands not, even his worldly interest, nor the interest and happiness of human society.

IN the *second* place, let us learn from what has been set forth, one of the most awful and important of all truths, the reality of a divine government exercised over the world. Blind must that man be, who discerns not the most striking marks of it, in the doctrine which has been under our view. If there be a sceptic, who contends, that unrestrained liberty in the gratification of desire is given to man; that in the sight of his Creator, all actions are equal; and that no rule of moral conduct hath been prescribed, or by any penalty enforced; in order to confute such a man, we have not recourse to reasonings, but simply appeal to plain and obvious facts. We bid him look only to the life of man; and take notice how every vice, is by the constitution of

S E R M. things, connected with misery. We  
 XIV. bid him trace the history of any one,  
 with whose conduct he had particular  
 occasion to be acquainted; and observe,  
 whether the chief misfortunes which  
 pursued him were not brought upon  
 him by his own misbehaviour. We bid  
 him remark in the history of nations,  
 whether public virtue has not always  
 exalted them; and whether licentious-  
 ness and crimes have not paved the way  
 for their ruin. These are testimonies to  
 the truth of religion, which cannot by  
 any sophistry be evaded. This is a  
 voice, which speaks its warnings loud  
 and strong to every heart.

The system upon which the divine go-  
 vernment at present proceeds, plainly is,  
 that men's *own wickedness* should be ap-  
 pointed to *correct them*; that sinners  
 should *be snared in the work of their hands,*  
*and sunk in the pit which themselves had*  
*digged; that the backslider in heart should*  
*be filled with his own ways.*—Of all the  
 plans which could have been devised for  
 the government of the world, this ap-  
 proves

proves itself to reason, as the wisest and most worthy of God; so to frame the constitution of things, that the divine laws should in a manner execute themselves, and carry their sanctions in their own bosom. When the vices of men require punishment to be inflicted, the Almighty is at no loss for ministers of justice. A thousand instruments of vengeance are at his command; innumerable arrows are always in his quiver. But such is the profound wisdom of his plan, that no peculiar interposals of power are requisite. He has no occasion to step from his throne, and to interrupt the order of nature. With that Majesty and solemnity which befits omnipotence, He pronounces, *Ephraim is joined to his idols; let him alone\**; He leaves transgressors to their own guilt, and punishment follows of course. Their sins do the work of justice. They lift the scourge; and with every stroke which they

S E R M.  
XIV.

\* Hosea iv. 17.

S E R M. they inflict on the criminal, they mix  
 XIV. this severe admonition, that as he is only  
 reaping the fruit of his own actions, he  
 deserves all that he suffers.—From  
 what has been said, I might take oc-  
 casion,

IN the *third* place, to show the in-  
 justice of our charging Providence with  
 a promiscuous and unequal distribution  
 of its favours, among the good and the  
 bad. That unequal distribution takes  
 place in appearance only, not in reality.  
 The whole conduct of Providence suffi-  
 ciently marks, which of those classes of  
 men it blesses and protects. The prof-  
 perity of sinners is no more than a de-  
 ceitful show. The great materials of  
 happiness are provided for the virtuous;  
 and *evil* never fails to *pursue the wicked*.  
 I shall close the discourse with observing,

IN the *fourth* and last place, the ne-  
 cessity which plainly arises from our pre-  
 sent condition, of looking up to God for  
 direction and aid, in the conduct of life.  
 The result of the whole doctrine I have  
 now



now delivered is, that man's happiness or misery is, in a great measure, put into his own hands. In vain he complains of Providence. If his *heart fret against the Lord*, it is only because his *foolishness had perverted his way*: for on himself, and his own behaviour, it depends, to be free of those miseries which harrass the wicked.—But alas! when we say that this depends upon man, on what uncertain ground do we place his security? Is man, when left to himself, equal to this high trust, that is reposed in him, this important charge that is committed to him, of attaining happiness, by wise and irreproachable conduct? Inconstant as he is in virtue, variable in his resolutions, soft and yielding in his nature to a thousand temptations; how shall he guide himself through such slippery and dangerous paths as those of human life; where many hidden precipices surround him; many false lights lead him astray; and where the consequence of every step he takes may be destruction and ruin?

S E R M.  
XIV.

SERM. ruin?—Thankful let us be to heaven,  
 XIV. that in this situation, a merciful guide  
 stretches out his hand to aid us; that a  
 celestial light shines upon us from  
 above; that a divine Spirit is promised  
 to illuminate and strenghten us. Let us  
 humbly request of Heaven, that this  
 Spirit of the Almighty may ever be our  
 guide; never presumptuously trusting in  
 our own wisdom; but listening atten-  
 tively to the voice of God; and *in all our  
 ways acknowledging Him* who only can  
*direct our steps.*—Upon the whole, let  
 us hold fast the persuasion of these fun-  
 damental truths;—that in all his dispen-  
 sations, God is just and good; that the  
 cause of all the troubles we suffer is in  
 ourselves, not in him; that virtue is the  
 surest guide to a happy life; that he who  
 forsakes this guide, enters upon the path  
 of death; but that he who *walketh up-  
 rightly, walketh surely*; and that he who  
*keepeth the commandment, keepeth his own  
 soul.*

## S E R M O N XV.

### ON INTEGRITY as the GUIDE of LIFE.

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PROVERBS xi. 3.

*The integrity of the upright shall guide them.—*

**R**IGHTEOUSNESS and sin are, in <sup>SERM.</sup>  
this book of Proverbs, frequently <sup>XV.</sup>  
contrasted with each other, and the advantages of the former displayed. The righteous man is shown to be *more excellent than his neighbour, as the ways in which he walks are ways of pleasantness, while the way of transgressors is hard.* Honour is represented as attending the  
one,

S E R M. one, while shame is the portion of the  
 XV. other. The path of the one leads to  
 life; that of the other to destruction.  
 In the text, an advantage of righteouf-  
 ness is specified, which is not common-  
 ly attended to, and which some will not  
 readily allow that it possesses. We are  
 told by the wise man, that it affords  
 light and direction to conduct, and will  
 prove our best guide through all the  
 intricacies of life. *The integrity of the  
 upright shall guide them*; or, as it is ad-  
 ded, to the same purpose, in a following  
 verse, *the righteousness of the perfect  
 shall direct his way*. There are ma-  
 ny who will admit, that integrity is  
 an amiable quality; that it is entitled  
 to much respect, and in most cases  
 ought to influence our behaviour; who  
 nevertheless are unwilling to  
 allow it the chief place in the direction  
 of their worldly conduct. They hold,  
 that a certain artful sagacity, founded  
 upon knowledge of the world, is the best  
 conductor of every one, who would be a  
 successful adventurer in life; and that a  
 strict attention to integrity, as his only  
 guide,

guide, would often lead him into danger and distress. In opposition to tenets of this kind, I now purpose to shew, that amidst all perplexities and dangers, there is no guide we can choose so safe, and so successful on the whole, as the integrity of an upright mind; and that upon every trying occasion, principles of probity and honour will conduct a good man through life with more advantage, than if he were to act upon the most refined system of worldly wisdom.

IT will not take much time to delineate the character of the man of integrity, as by its nature it is a plain one, and easily understood. He is one, who makes it his constant rule to follow the road of duty, according as the word of God, and the voice of his conscience, point it out to him. He is not guided merely by affections, which may sometimes give the colour of virtue to a loose and unstable character. The upright man is guided by a fixed principle of mind, which determines him to esteem nothing but what

S E R M. <sup>XV.</sup> what is honourable ; and to abhor what-  
 ever is base and unworthy, in moral conduct. Hence you find him ever the same ; at all times, the trusty friend, the affectionate relation, the conscientious man of business, the pious worshipper, the public spirited citizen. He assumes no borrowed appearance. He seeks no mask to cover him ; for he acts no stupid part ; but he is in truth what he appears to be, full of truth, candour, and humanity. In all his pursuits, he knows no path but the fair and direct one ; and would much rather fail of success, than attain it by reproachful means. He never shows you a smiling countenance, while he meditates evil against you in his heart. He never praises you among your friends ; and then joins in traducing you among your enemies. You will never find one part of his character at variance with another. In his manners, he is simple and unaffected ; in all his proceedings, open and consistent.—Such is the man of integrity spoken of in the text. Let us now proceed to show, in  
 what

what manner, and with what effect, integrity serves for the guide of his life. S E R M.  
XV.

EVERY one who has begun to make any progress in the world, will be sensible, that to conduct himself in human affairs with wisdom and propriety, is often a matter of no small difficulty. Amidst that variety of characters, of jarring dispositions, and of interfering interests, which take place among those with whom we have intercourse, we are frequently at a stand, as to the part most prudent for us to chuse. Ignorant of what is passing in the breasts of those around us, we can form no more than doubtful conjectures concerning the events that are likely to happen. They may take some turn altogether different from the course in which we had imagined they were to run, and according to which we had formed our plans. The slightest incident often shoots out into important consequences, of which we were not aware. The labyrinth becomes so intricate, that the most sagacious

S E R M. <sup>XV.</sup> cious can lay hold on no clue to guide him through it: He finds himself embarrassed, and at a loss how to act.—In public and in private life, in managing our own concerns, and in directing those of others, the doubt started by the Wise man frequently occurs; *Who knoweth what is good for man in this life?*—While thus fatigued with conjecture, we remain perplexed and undetermined in our choice; we are at the same time pulled to different sides, by the various emotions which belong to our nature. On one hand, pleasure allures us to what is agreeable; on the other, interest weighs us down towards what seems gainful. Honour attracts us towards what is splendid; and indolence inclines us to what is easy. In the consultations which we hold with our own mind, concerning our conduct, how often are we thus divided within ourselves; puzzled by the uncertainty of future events, and distracted by the contest of different inclinations?



It is in such situations as these, that S E R M.  
the principle of integrity interposes to XV.  
give light and direction. While worldly  
men fluctuate in the midst of ~~those~~ per-  
plexities which I have ~~described~~, the  
virtuous man has ~~one~~ Oracle, to which  
he resorts in ~~every~~ dubious case, and  
whose ~~decisions~~ he holds to be infallible:  
He ~~consults~~ his conscience. He listens to  
the ~~voice~~ of God. Were it only on a  
~~few~~ occasions that this Oracle could be  
consulted, its value would be less. But  
it is a mistake to imagine, that its Res-  
ponses are seldom given. Hardly is there  
any material transaction whatever in hu-  
man life, any important question, that  
holds us in suspense as to practice, but  
the difference between right and wrong  
will shew itself; and the principle of  
integrity will, if we listen to it impar-  
tially, give a clear decision. When-  
ever the mind is divided within itself.  
conscience is seldom or never neutral.  
There is always one side or other to  
which it leans. There is always one  
scale of the balance, into which it  
throws

S E R M. throws the weight of *some virtue; or*  
 XV. *some praise; of something that is just and*  
*true, lovely, honest, and of good report.*

These are the forms, which rise to the observation of the upright man. By others they may be unseen, or overlooked; but in his eye, the lustre of virtue outshines all other brightness. Wherever this pole star directs him, he steadily holds his course.—Let the issue of that course be ever so uncertain; let his friends differ from him in opinion; let his enemies clamour; he is not moved; his purpose is fixed. He asks but one question of his heart, what is the most worthy and honourable part; what is the part most becoming the station which he possesses, the character which he wishes to bear, the expectations which good men entertain of him? Being once decided as to this, he hesitates no more. He shuts his ears against every solicitation. He pursues the direct line of integrity, without *turning either to the right hand or to the left.* “It is the Lord who  
 “ calleth. Him I follow. Let him or-  
 “ der

“ der what seemeth good in his sight.” S E R M. XV.

—It is in this manner that the *integrity* of the upright acts as their guide.

But as, upon a superficial view, it may appear hazardous to place ourselves entirely under such a guide, let us now proceed to consider what can be said in defence of this plan of conduct, and what advantages serve to recommend it.

In the *first* place, I affirm, that the guidance of integrity is the safest under which we can be placed; that the road in which it leads us is, upon the whole, the freest from dangers. Perfect immunity from danger is not to be expected in this life. We can chuse no path, in which we may not meet with disappointments and misfortunes. Our life, at the best, is a pilgrimage, and perils surround it. Against these perils, the men of the world imagine that craft and dexterity furnish the best defence; and if, in any instance, they overreach the upright, they consider it as a manifest decision in favour of their

Vol. IV. X plan.

S E R M. <sup>XV.</sup> plan. But instead of resting on a few instances, let us take an extensive survey of the course of human affairs. Let us enquire who the persons are that, in all the different lines of life, have gone through the world with most success; and we shall find, that the men of probity and honour form by far the most considerable part of the list; we shall find that men of plain understanding, acting upon fair and direct views, have much oftener prospered, than men of the deepest policy, who were devoid of principle. How few are the instances of persons who by fidelity, worth, and stedfast adherence to their duty, have either lost their fortunes, or incurred general displeasure, in times when human affairs were proceeding in their ordinary train? But how numerous and frequent are the examples of those whose prospects have been blasted, whose circumstances have been ruined, and their names sunk into contempt by vice and dishonesty?

The man of the world aims at higher things,

things, and more rapid success, than the S E R M.  
man of moderation and virtue. But, at XV.

the same time, he incurs greater risks and dangers. No calculation of probabilities can ensure safety to him who is acting a deceitful part. Amidst the unforeseen vicissitudes of the world, he has to dread, not only disappointment to his plans, but the miseries also which detected fallacies may bring on his head. He walks on the edge of precipices, where a single false step may be fatal. He follows a wandering light, which, if it fail of guiding him by a short path to the Palace of ambition, lands him in the pit, or the lake. Whereas he who follows the guidance of integrity, walks in the high road on which the light of the sun shines. He sees before him the Habitation of peace to which his steps are directed; and if he be longer of arriving at it, he is sure of neither wandering far astray, nor of meeting on his road with any forms of unusual terror. —Let it be always remembered that the principle of integrity which

S E R M. directs a good man, is far from excluding  
 XV. prudence in the conduct of life. It implies no improvident or thoughtless simplicity. On the contrary, it is closely connected with true wisdom. A man of enlarged capacity, and extensive views, is always upright. Craft is merely the supplement of inferior abilities. It characterizes a narrow comprehension, and a little mind.—As the path of integrity is on the whole the safest path of conduct; so,

IN the *second* place, it is unquestionably the most honourable. Integrity is the foundation of all that is high in character among mankind. Other qualities may add to its splendor; but if this essential requisite be wanting, all their lustre fades. Were I drawing the character of one who claimed the admiration of the world; and after I had ascribed to him eloquence, valour, and every endowment that is most shining and captivating, did I add, that he was a man of too much art to be trusted, I appeal

peal to every one, whether, by this single stroke, the whole character would not be sunk and degraded; An interested and crafty man may perhaps rise into influence and high station; he may be a rich and a powerful, but will never be a great man. He may be feared, and externally honoured and courted; but in the secret thoughts of men he finds no respect. We all feel, that magnanimous sentiments cannot dwell in the same breast with selfishness and deceit.

He who rests upon an internal principle of virtue and honour, will act with a dignity and a boldness, of which they are incapable who are wholly guided by interest. He is above those timid suspicions, and cautious restraints, which fetter and embarrass their conduct. That firmness which the consciousness of rectitude inspires, gives vigour and force to his exertions on every great occasion. It adds double weight to all the abilities of which he is possessed. It even supplies the place of those abilities in which he is defective. They  
who

S E R M. who oppose him are obliged to honour  
 { XV. him. They look up to him with a  
 secret awe, as to one who moves above  
 them in a superior sphere; regardless of  
 their good or ill opinion, of their pro-  
 mises or their threatenings; like one of  
 those celestial luminaries which holds its  
 course through its orbit, without being  
 affected by any commotions among the  
 elements below. Such a man is trusted,  
 and relied upon, as well as esteemed,  
 because all know where to find him,  
 and upon what system he acts. He  
 attaches friends and followers to himself,  
 without courting them; and though his  
 progress towards fame should be slow,  
 and interrupted at first by crooked arts,  
 it is nevertheless certain and sure. The  
 public may be misled for a while, in  
 judging of real merit; but it is seldom  
 unjust at the last. As persons con-  
 tinue to come forward to view, and  
 to act their part in trying circumstan-  
 ces, their characters are at length  
 fully ascertained; and, almost always,  
 rated as they deserve. How corrupt  
 soever the world may be, they can-  
 not



not with-hold approbation from him, S E R M.  
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whose conduct is marked by uniform integrity and honour. Enemies he will have ; but the public favours him ; the multitude of men wish him success ; and destine him, in their thoughts, to every step of his preferment, before he arrives at it.

IN the *third* place, the plan of conduct, on which the man of integrity proceeds is the most comfortable ; that is, attended with the greatest satisfaction in a man's own mind. Amidst the various and perplexing events of life, it is of singular advantage to be kept free from doubt, as to the part most proper to be chosen. He who consults nothing but worldly interest must, upon every turn of fortune, undergo much painful suspense. He is obliged to listen with anxious ear to every whisper of report ; and upon every new aspect which the face of affairs assumes, must study how to place himself in a new posture of defence. But the man of principle is a stranger to these  
these

S E R M. inward troubles. His time is not lost ;  
 { XV. } nor his temper fretted by long and anxious consultations. One light always shines upon him from above. One path, the path of integrity, always opens clear and distinct to his view.—But this is not his only advantage, to be freed from embarrassments, by having placed himself under the charge of one constant guide. He is also rewarded with the sense of having chosen his guide well and wisely. He is delivered from all inward upbraidings, from all misgivings of mind, from all alarms founded on the dread of discovery and disgrace. A good conscience enables him to look back on the part which he has acted with satisfaction ; and to look forward to the issue which it may bring, without concern. It is in the case of one issue only, that the man who acts from worldly interest can enjoy satisfaction ; that is, when his designs have succeeded according to his wish. But it is the felicity of the man, who acts under the direction of integrity, that in every issue, he has  
 something

something to comfort him. Though success has failed him, the consolation remains of having done his duty, and studied to approve himself to God.

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THIS reference of all his actions to divine approbation, furnishes another source of satisfaction and peace. He looks up, with pleasing hope, to a Protector in the heavens, who *loveth righteousness, and whose countenance beholdeth the upright.* The man of worldly wisdom is conscious of having no title to the favour of that high administration which rules the universe. By quitting the path of righteousness, he has left that straight road, in which God had appointed him to walk. He has taken the direction of his way to himself; and chosen to be his own guide and master. To his own abilities, therefore, such as they are, he must trust; and is become wholly responsible for the issue of his conduct. But the man of virtue hath *committed his way to the Lord.* He follows the divine signal. He co-operates with the

S E R M. the divine purpose. The power which  
 {<sup>XV.</sup> sways the universe is engaged on his side.  
 By natural consequence, he has ground  
 to expect, that any seeming disappoint-  
 ments which he may now incur, shall  
 be over-ruled at the end to some salutary  
 effect. Hence, that *peace of God keeping  
 the heart*, to which worldly men are  
 strangers. Hence a degree of firmness  
 and resolution in conduct, which it is  
 impossible for them to possess. Especi-  
 ally when we add,

IN the *fourth* and last place, that he  
 who thus pursues a course of integrity,  
 has always in his view the prospect of  
 immortal rewards. That surely is the  
 wisest direction of conduct, which is  
 most amply recompensed at last. But  
 what recompence can worldly wisdom  
 bestow, comparable to what is promised  
 by the gospel to them who, *by patient  
 continuance in well doing, look for glory,  
 honour, and immortality?*—The recom-  
 pence indeed is distant; but the hope of  
 it is present; and hope is one of the  
 most

most powerful principles of human ac-  
tion. Let a man be firm in the belief that  
he is acting under the immediate protec-  
tion of Heaven, and that through all  
eternity he shall be rewarded for what  
he now performs; and, as far as this be-  
lief is prevalent, his conduct will be  
steady and determined. Wherever reli-  
gion directs him to hold his course, he  
will advance with intrepidity. He will  
submit to restraints without reluctance.  
He will meet dangers without fear. To  
every motive which reason suggests in  
favour of virtue, the hope of eternal life  
adds supernatural strength.—Accord-  
ingly, in the behaviour of many holy  
men, under the most trying circumstan-  
ces of distress, we behold this effect  
eminently exemplified. It appears, with  
much lustre, in the spirited and magna-  
nanimous sentiments of the Apostle Paul,  
when he had the prospect of death be-  
fore him. *Behold I go bound in the spirit  
to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that  
shall befall me there, save that the Holy  
Ghost witnesseth that bonds and afflictions  
abide*

S E R M.

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SERM. *abide me. But none of these things move*  
 {<sup>XV.</sup> *me; neither count I my life dear unto my-*  
*self, so that I may finish my course with*  
*joy\*.—I am now ready to be offered, and*  
*the time of my departure is at hand. I have*  
*fought a good fight; I have finished my*  
*course; I have kept the faith. Henceforth*  
*there is laid up for me a crown of righte-*  
*ousness, which the Lord, the righteous*  
*Judge, shall give me at that day†.*

THUS I have endeavoured to shew in what manner the *integrity of the upright guides them*; and what the advantages are of placing ourselves under its guidance. If it be the line of safety, or the line of honour, which we chuse to pursue; if we consult our present comfort, or look forward to future rewards; in all these respects, the course which integrity points out is by far the most eligible.

It is a great recommendation of the guidance offered to us by integrity, that it is easily understood by all men. Plans  
 of

\* Acts xx. 22.

† 2 Timothy iv. 6.

of worldly policy are deep and intricate; and experience shews how often the ablest persons are mistaken in the measures which they adopt for carrying them on. But when men's intentions are fair and upright, it will be found that a moderate share of understanding and attention is all that is requisite, for conducting themselves with safety and propriety. Providence never intended, that the art of living happily in this world should depend on that deep penetration, that acute sagacity, and those refinements of thought, which few possess. It has dealt more graciously with us; and made happiness to depend on uprightness of intention, much more than on extent of capacity. For the most part, the first sentiment which strikes a good man, concerning what he ought, or ought not to do, is the soundest, and suggests the best and wisest counsel. When he hesitates, and begins to deliberate how far his duty, or his honour, can be reconciled to what seems his interest, he is on the point of deviating into a dangerous

S E R M.

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S E R M. gerous path.—At the same time, it is of  
 XV. } great consequence, that he who seeks to  
 surrender his conduct to the direction of  
 integrity, should be well apprized of  
 what true integrity requires. Let him  
 guard against burdening conscience un-  
 necessarily; lest a superstitious regard to  
 trifles lead him to relax in matters of  
 higher obligation. Let him avoid mi-  
 nute scrupulosity, on the one hand. Let  
 him keep at a distance from loose casu-  
 istry on the other. But when he is satis-  
 fied that his conscience has been well  
 informed, let him, without wavering,  
 adhere to its dictates in the whole of his  
 conduct. This will prove the truest wis-  
 dom both for this world and the next.  
*For he who walketh uprightly walketh  
 surely. The path of the just is as the shin-  
 ing light.: And it shall shine more and  
 more unto the perfect day.*



## S E R M O N · XVI.

On SUBMISSION to the DIVINE WILL.

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JOB ii. 10.

*—Shall we receive good at the hand of God,  
and shall we not receive evil ?*

**F**EW subjects of religious exhortation are of more general concern than those which respect the distresses incident to human life. For no society, no family, no person, can expect to be long exempted from them; and when we speak of the prosperous, we can only mean those who are more rarely subject  
to

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S E R M. to them than others. Now, under those  
 { XVI. distresses, religion performs two offices:

It teaches us how we ought to bear them; and it assists us in thus bearing them. Materials for both are found in the words of the text, which contain a sentiment so natural and just, as to carry conviction to every reasonable mind. They were the words of Job, at a time when, to his other calamities, this domestic affliction was added, that one, who ought to have assuaged and soothed his sorrows, provoked his indignation by an impious speech. *Thou speakest*, Job replies, *as one of the foolish women speaketh: What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?*—Three instructions naturally arise from the text: First, that this life is a mixed state of good and evil: Secondly, That both the goods and the evils in it proceed from God: And, thirdly, That there are just reasons for our receiving with patience the evils of life, from the same hand which bestows its goods.

I. THIS

I. THIS life is a mixed state of good and evil. This is a matter of fact, which will be denied by none, and on which it is not necessary to bestow much illustration. It is evident to the slightest inspection, that nothing here is unallayed and pure. Every man's state is chequered with alternate griefs and joys, disappointment and success. No condition is altogether stable. No life preserves always the same tenor. The vicissitudes of the world sometimes bring forward the afflicted into more comfortable circumstances; and often trouble the joy of the prosperous. This is the train in which human affairs have ever been found to proceed; and in which we may expect them always to go on.

But though this be universally admitted in speculation, and often confessed in discourse, the misfortune is, that few think of applying it to their own case. The bulk of mankind discover as much confidence in prosperity, and as much impatience under the least reverse, as if Providence had first given them as-

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 surance that their prosperity was never to change, and afterwards had cheated their hopes. Whereas, what reason ought to teach us, is, to adjust our mind to the mixed state in which we find ourselves placed; never to presume, never to despair; to be thankful for the goods which at present we enjoy, and to expect the evils that may succeed.—Thou hast been admitted to partake of the feast of life. Its good things are distributed, in various portions, among the guests. Thou hast had thine allotted share. Complain not, when thy portion is removed. It is not permitted to any one, to remain always at the banquet.

II. WE are taught by the text, that both the goods and the evils which compose this mixed state, come from the hand of God. A little reflection may convince us, that in God's world, neither good nor evil can happen by chance. If there were any one moment, in which God quitted the reins of the universe, and suffered any power to interfere with his

his

his administration, it is evident, that, S E R M O N.  
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from that moment, the measures of his government must become disjointed and incomplete. He who governs all things, must govern continually; and govern the least things as well as the greatest. *He never slumbers nor sleeps.* There are no void spaces, no broken plans, in his administration; no blessings that drop upon us without his intention; nor any crosses that visit us, unsent by him. *I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness. I make peace, and create evil. I the Lord do all these things\*.*

How it has come to pass, that this life should contain such a mixture of goods and evils, and that the mixture too should be of God's appointment, gives rise to a difficult inquiry. For how can any thing but what is good proceed from the God of love? Can darkness issue from the source of light?

\* Isaiah xlv. 6, 7.

*On Submission to*

Can we any satisfaction to the *Father* to behold the sorrows of creation he has made?—Here there was room for much perplexity, till revelation informed us, that the mixture of evils in man's estate is owing to man himself. Had he continued as God originally made him, he would have received nothing but good from his Creator. His apostasy and corruption opened the gates of the tabernacle of darkness. Misery issued forth, and has ever since pursued him. In the present condition of his nature, that misery is partly punishment, partly trial. He is become incapable of bearing uninterrupted prosperity; and by the mixture of evils in his lot, merciful designs are carried on for his improvement and restoration.

What the text leads us at present to consider is, the effect that will follow from imitating the example of Job, and referring to the hand of the Almighty, the evils which we suffer, as well as the goods which we enjoy. Such a reference of the distressful events of our life  
to

to the appointment of Heaven, not only S E R M. XVI. is a duty which piety requires, but tends also to mitigate distress, and to suggest consolation. For to dwell, as is too commonly done, upon the instruments and subordinate means of our trouble, is frequently the cause of much grief, and much sin. When we view our sufferings as proceeding merely from our fellow-creatures, the part which they have acted in bringing them upon us, is often more grating than the suffering itself. The unreasonableness, perhaps, of an enemy, the treachery of a friend, the ingratitude or insolence of one whom we had much obliged, add weight to a load laid upon us by means so provoking. The thoughts of their malignity, or of our own neglect in guarding against it, serve to poison the sore. Whereas, if instead of looking to men, we beheld the cross as coming from God, these aggravating circumstances would affect us less; we would feel no more than our proper burden; we would submit to it more patiently; and many resources

SERM. resources would open to us, as shall in a  
 XVI. little be shown, from thinking of the  
 hand that lays it on. Had - Job, when  
 despoiled of all his substance, thought  
 of nothing but the Chaldeans and Sa-  
 beans who robbed him, with what vio-  
 lent passions would he have been trans-  
 ported, and with what eager desires of  
 revenge tormented? Where~~s~~, consider-  
 ing them as rods and instruments only in  
 the divine hand, and receiving the correc-  
 tion as from the Almighty himself, the  
 tumult of his mind subsided; and with  
 respectful composure he could say, *The  
 Lord gave; and the Lord hath taken  
 away: Blessed be the name of the Lord.*  
 This leads me,

III. To consider the last, and most  
 important instruction, arising from the  
 text; namely, that there are many rea-  
 sons why we, who receive good from  
 the hand of God, should receive with  
 patience the evils which he is pleased to  
 inflict. This is strongly conveyed by  
 that interrogatory form of speech, in  
 which the sentiment of Job is expressed:

*What?*



*What? shall we receive good at the hands of God, and shall we not receive evil?* In order to unfold all that is contained in this appeal made to every man's conscience, let us consider,

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IN the *first* place, that the good things which God has bestowed, afford sufficient evidence for our believing, that the evils which he sends, are not causelessly or wantonly inflicted. Did we live in a world which bore the marks of a malicious or cruel governor, there might be reason for distrusting every step of his conduct. But in the world which we inhabit, we behold, on the contrary, plain marks of predominant goodness. We behold the structure of the universe, the order of nature, the general course of Providence, obviously arranged with a benevolent regard to the welfare of men. All the art and contrivance of which the divine works are full, point to this end; and the more they are explored, create the firmer belief, that the goodness of the Deity gave rise to the system of creation,

S E R M. creation. What is the conclusion to be  
 {XVI.} thence drawn, but that in such parts of  
 the divine administration as appear to  
 us harsh and severe, the same goodness  
 continues to preside, though exercised  
 in a hidden and mysterious manner ?

Let me desire you to consider, whether, if some powerful friend had placed you in an opulent and comfortable station, and, in the general conduct of your affairs, had discovered the most disinterested kindness, you would not ascribe any occasional discouragements you received, to some unknown reason or cause, rather than to his unfaithfulness or cruelty? Ought not the experience which we have had, and the discovery which all nature affords, of the divine goodness, lead us to put a like construction on the evils which we suffer from a hand that hath so frequently loaded us with good?—Have we forgotten, in the midst of our complaints, who brought us unto the light of day ; who watched over our helpless infancy ; who reared our growing childhood ; and through  
 ten

ten thousand surrounding dangers, has S E R M.  
been our protector and guardian until XVI.  
this day? How often has he rescued us  
from sickness and death, and made our  
hearts glad with unexpected comforts?  
Now, that some cloud is thrown over  
our prosperity, or some blessing with-  
drawn, in which for a time we had re-  
joiced, can we imagine that there is no  
good cause for this change of his pro-  
ceeding? Shall we suspect that his na-  
ture is entirely altered? *Hath God for-  
gotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger  
shut up his tender mercies?* No, let us say  
with the Psalmist, *This is my infirmity;*  
*but I will remember the works of the  
Lord. I will remember the years of the  
right hand of the most High\*.*—One sig-  
nal work of the most High, at least, let  
us remember, and rejoice in the remem-  
brance of it; even that final remedy  
which he has provided for all the evils  
occasioned by sin, in the redemption of  
the world accomplished by Jesus Christ.

*He*

\* Ps. lxxvii. 9. 10.

S E R M. *He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all,* will he, in any case, wantonly afflict the children of men with superfluous and unnecessary sorrows? Is not this a proof so satisfactory, so express and demonstrative, of the gracious purposes of God, as should dispose us to take in good part, every thing which proceeds from him? Consider,

In the *second* place, that the good things we receive from God are undeserved, the evils we suffer are justly merited. Every reasonable person must feel the weight of this consideration, for producing patience and submission. For, though to suffer at any rate be grievous, yet to suffer unjustly, is doubly galling. Whereas, when one receives a mixed portion, whereof the goods are above his deserts, and the evils below his deserts, to complain, in such a case, is unreasonable; there is more ground for being thankful.—All, it is true, have not deserved evil equally. Yet all of us deserve

deserve it more or less; and to merit good at the hand of the Lord, is what none of us can pretend. At the best we are but *unprofitable servants*. Even this is more than we are entitled to claim. For if God were to *enter into judgment* with us, who could stand before him? who could justify himself in his sight? When the most inoffensive compare their conduct with God's holy law; when they reflect upon the duties they have omitted, and the actual guilt they have contracted, they will find more reason to accuse themselves, than to complain of the divine chastisement. Whatever innocence any of us may plead, nay, whatever merit we may claim with respect to men and the world, we suffer no more than what we deserve from the Governor of the world; and of his displeasure, we know that the wrath of man is no other than the instrument.

Not only all of us have done evil, but what ought to be particularly attended to, God has a just title to punish us for it.

§ E R M. it. Although a man know that he de-  
 serves punishment, yet he will not allow  
 every one to inflict it. A child will  
 submit to his parents, a servant to his  
 master, a subject to the magistrate, when  
 he would not bear correction from ano-  
 ther hand. But no parent can have so  
 complete a right to authority over his  
 children, no master over his servants,  
 no magistrate over his subjects, as the  
 Almighty hath over us. When we  
 were born, we brought nothing with us  
 into God's world. During our conti-  
 nuance in it, we have lived on the good  
 things which God was pleased to lend  
 us; and of which, God and our own  
 conscience know that we have made but  
 a sorry improvement. When he thinks  
 proper to take any of them away, no  
 wrong is done us; for they were not  
 ours. To have enjoyed them so long,  
 was a favour. To enjoy them always,  
 was what we neither deserved, nor had  
 any title to expect.

In the *third* place, the good things  
 which

which at different times we have received and enjoyed, are much greater than the evils which we suffer. Of this fact, I am sensible it will be difficult to persuade the afflicted. But would they weigh, in a fair balance, the whole of their circumstances, they would find it true. Whatever persons feel at the present, makes so strong an impression upon them, as very commonly to obliterate the memory of all the past. When one is oppressed with some painful disease in his body, or wrung with some fore distress of mind, every former comfort, at that moment, goes for nothing. Life is beheld in all its gloom. A dark cloud seems to hang over it; and it is reviled, as no other than a scene of wretchedness and sorrow. But this is to be unjust to human life, as well as ungrateful to its author.—Let me only desire you to think how many days, how many months, how many years, you have passed in health, and ease, and comfort; how many pleasurable feelings you have had; how

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S E R M. how many friends you have enjoyed;  
 XVI. how many blessings, in short, of different kinds you have tasted; and you will be forced to acknowledge, that more materials of thanksgiving present themselves than of lamentation and complaint. — These blessings, you will say, are past. But though past, ought they to be gone from your remembrance? Do they merit no place, in the comparative estimate of the goods and evils of your state? Did you, could you, expect, that in this mutable world, any temporal joy was to last for ever? Has gratitude no influence to form your minds to a calm acquiescence in your Benefactor's appointments? What can be more reasonable than to say, " Having in former times received so many good things from the hand of God, shall I not now, without murmuring, receive the few evils which it pleases him to send?"

IN the *fourth* place, not only the goods of life are upon the whole greater than  
 its



its evils; but the evils which we suffer S E R M.  
XVI.  
are seldom, or never, without some mixture of good. As there is no condition on earth of pure unmixed felicity, so there is none so miserable, as to be destitute of every comfort. Entire and complete misery, if ever it take place, is of our own procuring, not of God's sending. None but the most gross and atrocious sinners can be in such a situation, as to discover no ray of relief or hope. In the ordinary distresses of life, it is generally our own folly and infirmity which, upon the loss of some one blessing that we had highly prized, deprives us of satisfaction in all other things. Many of our calamities are purely imaginary, and self-created; arising from rivalry or competition with others, and from false opinions of the importance of objects, to which custom and fashion have annexed an ideal value. Were these mistaken opinions once corrected by reason, the evil would disappear, and contentment would resume its place. With respect to those calamities

ties

S E R M. ties which are inflicted by God, his Pro-  
 XVI. vidence has made this wise and merciful  
 constitution, that, after the first shock,  
 the burden by degrees is lightened.  
 Time brings a gentle and powerful opiate  
 to all misfortunes. What is very violent  
 cannot last long; and what lasts long we  
 become accustomed to bear. Every  
 situation that is permanent, at length  
 is felt to be tolerable. The mind ac-  
 commodates itself to it; and by degrees  
 regains its usual tranquillity. Hence  
 the greatest part of the evils of life are  
 more terrible in the previous apprehen-  
 sion, than in the actual feeling; and it  
 seldom happens but, in one corner or  
 other, something is found on which the  
 mind can lay hold for its relief.

How many, for instance, do we  
 behold around us, straitened in their  
 worldly circumstances, and yet find-  
 ing the means to live chearfully,  
 with poverty and peace in the same  
 habitation? If we are deprived of  
 friends whom we tenderly loved, are  
 there not still some remaining, from  
 whom

whom we may expect much comfort? If ER.M.  
 our bodies are afflicted with sore disease, XVI.  
 have we not reason to be thankful that  
 our mind continues vigorous and entire;  
 that we are in a situation to look aróund  
 us for whatever can afford us ease; and  
 that after the decay of this frail and moul-  
 dering tabernacle, we can look forward  
 to a *house not made with hands, eternal in  
 the heavens?*—In the midst of all distres-  
 ses, there remains to every sincere Chris-  
 tian, that mixture of pure and genuine  
 consolation, which springs from the pro-  
 mises and hopes of the gospel. Consider,  
 I beseech you what a singularly hap-  
 py distinction this makes in your situa-  
 tion, beyond the state of those who,  
 under the various troubles of life, are  
 left *without hope, and without God in the  
 world;* without any thing to look to,  
 but a train of unknown causes and ac-  
 cidents, in which they see no light  
 nor comfort.—Thank the Father of  
 mercies, that into all the evils he  
 sends, he infuses this joyful hope, that  
*the sufferings of the present time are*

S E R M. *not worthy to be compared with the glory.*  
 XVI. *that shall be revealed in the end, to the*  
 virtuous and good.

IN the *fifth* and last place, as the evils which we suffer are thus alleviated by a mixture of good; so we have reason to believe, that the evils themselves are, in many respects, good. When borne with patience and dignity, they improve and enoble our character. They bring into exercise several of the manly and heroic virtues; and by the constancy and fidelity with which we support our trials on earth, prepare us for the highest rewards in heaven.—It has always been found, that the present constitution of human nature cannot bear uninterrupted prosperity, without being corrupted by it. The poisonous weeds which spring up in that too luxuriant soil, require the hand of adversity to extirpate them. It is the experience of sorrow and distress that subdues the arrogance of pride, tames the violence of passion, softens the hardness of the selfish

fish heart, and humanizes the temper to feel for the woes of others. Many have had reason to say, that *it was good for them to be afflicted\**. When men take the timbrel and the harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ, they are apt to say unto God, *Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve him? But when they are holden in cords of affliction, then he sheweth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded. He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity†*. Is his case to be deplored as highly calamitous, who, by forfeiting some transient enjoyments of the world, purchases lasting improvement in piety and virtue, and exchanges a few of the good things of this life for the better things of another?

INFLUENCED by such considerations as these, let us look up with reverence to the

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great

\* Psalm cxix. 71.

† Job. xxi. 12—xxxvi. 8.

SERM. great Disposer of events; and under any  
 XVI. distress with which he is pleased to visit  
 us, let us utter no other voice but this;  
*Shall we receive good at the hand of God,  
 and shall we not receive evil?*—Men are  
 too often ingenious in making themselves  
 miserable, by aggravating to their own  
 fancy, beyond bounds, all the evils  
 which they endure. They compare  
 themselves with none but those whom  
 they imagine to be more happy; and  
 complain that upon them alone has fal-  
 len the whole load of human sorrows.  
 Would they look with a more impartial  
 eye on the world, they would see them-  
 selves surrounded with sufferers; and  
 find that they are only drinking out of  
 that mixed cup, which Providence has  
 prepared for all.—“ I will restore your  
 “ daughter again to life,” said the eastern  
 sage, to a prince who grieved immode-  
 rately for the loss of a beloved child,  
 “ provided you are able to engrave  
 “ on her tomb the names of three per-  
 “ sons who have never mourned.” The  
 prince made inquiry after such persons;  
 but

but found the enquiry vain, and was fi-  
lent.—To every reasonable person, who  
retains the belief of religious principles,  
many alleviating circumstances, and  
many arguments for patience, will oc-  
cur under every distress. If we rest on  
this firm persuasion that there is a wise  
and just Providence which disposes of  
all events, we shall have reason to con-  
clude, that nothing happens to us here  
without some good design. Trusting  
that a happy termination shall at last ar-  
rive to the disorders of our present state,  
we shall be enabled, amidst all the va-  
rieties of fortune, to preserve that equa-  
nimity which befits Christians; and un-  
der every trial to say, *It is the Lord;*  
*let him do what seemeth good in his fight!*

# S E R M O N XVII.

ON FRIENDSHIP.

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PROVERBS xxvii. 10.

*Thine own friend, and thy father's friend,  
for sake not.—*

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**W**HATEVER relates to the behaviour of men in their social character, is of great importance in religion. The duties which spring from that character, form many branches of the great law of charity, which is the favourite precept of christianity. They, therefore, who would separate such duties from a religious spirit, or who at most treat them as only the inferior parts of



of it, do real injury to religion. They <sup>S E R M.</sup> are mistaken friends of piety, who, <sup>XVII.</sup> under the notion of exalting it, place it in a sort of insulated corner, disjoined from the ordinary affairs of the world; and the connections of men with one another. On the contrary, true piety influences them all. It acts as a vivifying spirit, which animates and enlivens, which rectifies and conducts them. It is no less friendly to men than zealous for the honour of God; and by the generous affections which it nourishes, and the beneficent influence which it exerts on the whole of conduct, is fully vindicated from every reproach which the infidel would throw upon it.—In this view, I am now to discourse on the nature and duties of virtuous friendship, as closely connected with the true spirit of religion. It is a subject which the inspired philosopher who is the author of this book of Proverbs, has thought worthy of his repeated notice; and in many passages has bestowed the highest elogiums on friendship among good men. *As ointment*

SERM.  
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*ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel. As iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. Make sure of thy friend; for faithful are the wounds of a friend. A friend loveth at all times; and a brother is born for adversity. There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.—Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, it is said in the text, forsake not.*

I MUST begin the subject, by observing, that there are among mankind friendships of different kinds, or, at least, connexions which assume that name. When they are no more than confederacies of bad men, they ought to be called conspiracies, rather than friendships. Some bond of common interest, some league against the innocent and unsuspecting, may have united them for a time. But they are held together only by a rope of sand. At bottom they are all rivals, and hostile to one another. Their friendship can subsist no longer than

than interest cements them. Every one looks with a jealous eye on his supposed friend; and watches the first favourable opportunity to desert, or to betray.

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Friendships too there are of a different kind, and of a more respectable nature, formed by the connection of political parties. It is not, perhaps, on selfish or crooked designs that such friendships are originally founded. Men have been associated together by some public interest, or general cause, or for defence against some real or imagined danger; and connexions thus formed, often draw men into close union, and inspire for a season no small degree of cordial attachment. When upon just and honourable principles this union is founded, it has proved on various occasions, favourable to the cause of liberty and good order among mankind. At the same time, nothing is more ready to be abused than the name of public spirit, and a public cause. It is a name, under which private interest is often sheltered, and selfish designs are carried on. The un-  
wary

SERM. wary are allured by a specious appear-  
 XVII. ance ; and the heat of faction usurps the  
 } place of the generous warmth of friend-  
 ship.

IT is not of such friendships, whether of the laudable or the suspicious kind, that I am now to discourse ; but of private friendships, which grow neither out of interested designs, nor party zeal ; but which flow from that similarity of dispositions, that corresponding harmony of minds, which endears some person to our heart, and makes us take as much part in his circumstances, fortunes, and fate, as if they were our own. *The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David ; and Jonathan loved him as his own soul\**. Such friendships certainly are not unreal ; and for the honour of human nature, it is to be hoped are not altogether unfrequent among mankind.—Happy it is, when they take root in our early years ; and are engrafted on the ingenuous sensibility of youth. Friendships then contracted, retain

\* 1 Samuel xviii. 1.

retain to the last a tenderness and warmth, seldom possessed by friendships that are formed in the riper periods of life. The remembrance of ancient and youthful connections melts every human heart, and the dissolution of them is, perhaps, the most painful feeling to which we are exposed here below. But at whatever period of life friendships are formed, as long as they continue sincere and affectionate, they form, undoubtedly, one of the greatest blessings we can enjoy. By the pleasing communication of all our sentiments which they prompt, they are justly said to double our pleasures, and to divide our sorrows. They give a brighter sunshine to the gay incidents of life; and they enlighten the gloom of its darker hours. *A faithful friend*, it is justly and beautifully said, by one of the Apocryphal writers, *is the medicine of life*\*. A variety of occasions happen, when to pour  
forth

SERM.  
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\* Ecclesiasticus vi. 16.

S E R M. <sup>XVII.</sup> forth the heart to one whom we love and trust, is the chief comfort, perhaps the only relief, we can enjoy. Miserable is he who, shut up within the narrow inclosure of selfish interest, has no person to whom he can at all times, with full confidence, expand his soul.

SINCE cordial friendship is so great a blessing to human life, let us proceed to consider what duties it requires, and by what methods it may be cultivated to most advantage. The fundamental qualities of true friendship are, constancy and fidelity. Without these material ingredients, it is of no value. An inconstant man is not capable of friendship. He may perhaps have affections which occasionally glow in his heart; which excite fondness for amiable qualities; or connect him with seeming attachment to one whom he esteems, or to whom he has been obliged. But after these feelings have lasted for a little, either fancied interest alienates him, or some new object attracts

tracts him; and he is no longer the same person to those whom he once loved. A man of this inconstant mind cannot be said to have any mind at all. For where there is no fixedness of moral principle, occasional feelings are of no value; mind is of no effect; and with such persons it is never desirable to have any connexion. Where constancy is wanting, there can be no fidelity, which is the other basis of friendship. For all friendship supposes entire confidence and trust; supposes the seal of secrecy to be inviolable; supposes promises and engagements to be sacred; and no advantage of our own to be pursued, at the expence of our friend's honour. An inconstant man, is despicable. A faithless man, is base.

But supposing neither constancy nor fidelity to be altogether wanting, still however friendship is in hazard of suffering from the follies, and unreasonable humours,

S E R M. humours, to which all of us are liable.

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It is to be regarded as a tender plant in an unfavourable soil, which, in order to its flourishing, requires to be reared and nursed with care. The following directions may be of use for promoting its cultivation, and preserving it from whatever might be apt to blast and wither it.

IN the *first* place, let me advise you not to expect perfection in any with whom you contract friendship. It holds in general, with respect to all worldly pursuits, that the more moderate our expectations are, they are likely to be the more successful. If, in any situation of life, we hope to possess complete happiness, we may depend on receiving mortifications. If, in any person, we trust to find nothing but perfection, we may be assured that on longer acquaintance, we shall meet with disappointments. In the case of friendship, this admonition is the more necessary

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ry to be given, as a certain warmth and enthusiasm belong to it, which are apt to carry us beyond the bounds of nature. In young minds, especially, a disposition of this kind is often found to take place. They form to themselves romantic ideas, gathered perhaps from fictitious histories, of the high and heroic qualities which belong to human nature. All those qualities they ascribe, without reserve or limitation, to the person with whom they wish to enter into intimate friendship; and on the least failure appearing, alienation instantly follows. Hence many a friendship, hastily perhaps contracted, is as hastily dissolved, and disgust succeeds to violent attachment.—Remember, my friends, that a faultless character on earth is a mere chimera. Many failings you experience in yourselves. Be not surprised, when you discover the like in others, of whom you had formed the highest opinion. The best and most estimable persons are they, in whom the fewest material defects are found; and whose great  
and

S E R M.  
XVII.

SERM. and solid qualities counterbalance the  
 XVII. common infirmities of men. It is to  
 these qualities you are to look in forming  
 friendships; to good sense and prudence,  
 which constitute the basis of every res-  
 pectable character; to virtue, to good  
 temper, to steadiness of affection; and  
 according to the union of those disposi-  
 tions, esteem yourselves happy in the  
 friend whom you chuse.

In the *second* place, I must admonish  
 you not to be hurt by differences of opi-  
 nion arising in intercourse with your  
 friends. It is impossible for these not to  
 occur. Perhaps no two persons were  
 ever cast so exactly in the same mould, as  
 to think always in the same manner, on  
 every subject. It was wisely contrived by  
 Providence, that diversity of sentiment  
 should take place among men, on purpose  
 to exercise our faculties, and to give varie-  
 ty to human life. Perpetual uniformity  
 of thought would become monotonous  
 and insipid.—When it is with regard to  
 trifles

trifles that diversity or contrariety of opinions shows itself, it is childish in the last degree, if this become the ground of estranged affection. When from such a cause there arises any breach of friendship, human weakness is then discovered in a mortifying light. In matters of serious moment, the sentiments of the best and worthiest may vary from those of their friends, according as their lines of life diverge, or as their temper, and habits of thought, present objects under different points of view. But among candid and liberal minds, unity of affection will still be preserved. No man has any title to erect his own opinions into an universal and infallible standard; And the more enlarged that any man's mind is, the more readily he will overlook difference in sentiments, as long as he is persuaded that the mind of his friend is upright, and that he follows the dictates of conscience and integrity.

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XVII.

IN the *third* place, It is material to the preservation of friendship, that openness of temper and manners, on both hands, be cultivated. Nothing more certainly dissolves friendship, than the jealousy which arises from darkness and concealment. If your situation oblige you to take a different side from your friend, do it openly. Avow your conduct; avow your motives; as far as honour allows, disclose yourselves frankly; seek no cover from unnecessary and mysterious secrecy. Mutual confidence is the soul of friendship. As soon as that is destroyed, or even impaired, it is only a show of friendship that remains. What was once cordial intimacy, degenerates first into formal civility. Constraint on both sides next succeeds; and disgust or hatred soon follow.—The maxim that has been laid down by certain crooked politicians, to behave to a friend with the same guarded caution as we would do to an enemy, because it is possible that he may one day become such, discovers a mind which never  
was

was made for the enjoyments of friendship. It is a maxim which, not unreasonably I admit, may find place in those political and party friendships, of which I before spoke, where personal advancement is always, in view. But it is altogether inconsistent with the spirit of those friendships, which are formed, and understood to be nourished, by the heart.

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THE *fourth* advice which I give is, To cultivate, in all intercourse among friends, gentle and obliging manners. It is a common error to suppose, that familiar intimacy supersedes attention to the lesser duties of behaviour; and that, under the notion of freedom, it may excuse a careless, or even a rough, demeanour. On the contrary, an intimate connection can only be kept up, by a constant wish to be pleasing and agreeable. The nearer and closer that men are brought together, the more frequent that the points of contact between them become, there is the greater necessity for the surface being smooth, and every

S E R M. thing being removed that can grate or offend.—Let no harshness, no appearance  
 XVII. of neglect, no supercilious affectation of superiority, occur in the intercourse of friends. A tart reply, a proneness to rebuke, a captious and contradictory spirit, are often known to embitter domestic life, and to set friends at variance. In those smaller articles of behaviour, where men are too apt to be careless, and to indulge their humour without restraint, the real character is often understood to break forth, and shew itself. It is by no means enough, that, in all matters of serious interest, we think ourselves ready to prove the sincerity of our friendship. These occur more rarely. The ordinary tenor of life is composed of small duties and offices, which men have occasion daily to perform; and it is only by rendering daily behaviour agreeable, that we can long preserve the comforts of friendship.

In the *fifth* place, let me caution you not to listen rashly to evil reports against  
 your

your friends. When upon proper S E R M.  
 grounds you have formed a connection, XVII.  
 be slow of believing any thing against  
 the friend whom you have chosen.  
 Remember, that there is among man-  
 kind a spirit of malignity, which too of-  
 ten takes pleasure in disturbing the soci-  
 ety of those who appear to enjoy one  
 another. The scripture hath warned  
 us, that there is *a whisperer who separ-  
 ateth chief friends; there is a false witness  
 who soweth discord among brethren.* Give  
 not therefore a ready ear to the officious  
 insinuations of those who, under the guise  
 of friendly concern, come to admonish  
 you, that you ought to stand on your  
 guard against those whom they see you  
 disposed to trust. Consider, whether,  
 under this fair appearance, there may not  
 lurk some secret envy and rivalry, or  
 some concealed interest. Chase not  
 every flying report. Suffer not the  
 poison of jealousy easily to taint your  
 mind, and break your peace. A wide  
 difference there is between that weak  
 credulity which allows itself to be im-  
 posed upon blindly, and that dark and  
 suspicious

S E R M. suspicious spirit which is always inclined  
 XVII. to the evil side. It forms part of the  
 character of a wise and good man, that  
 he is not prone to *take up a reproach*  
*against his neighbour.*

IN the *sixth* and last place, let me exhort you not to desert your friend in danger or distress. Too many there are in the world, whose attachment to those they call their friends is confined to the day of their prosperity. As long as that continues, they are, or appear to be, affectionate and cordial. But as soon as their friend is under a cloud, they begin to withdraw, and to separate their interests from his. In friendships of this sort, the heart, assuredly, has never had much concern. For the great test of true friendship, is constancy in the hour of danger, adherence in the season of distress.—When your friend is calumniated, then is the time, openly and boldly to espouse his cause. When his situation is changed, or his fortunes are falling, then is the time of  
 affording



affording prompt and zealous aid. When S E R M. <sup>XVII.</sup>  
 sickness or infirmity occasion him to be neglected by others, that is the opportunity which every real friend will seize, of redoubling all the affectionate attentions which love suggests. These are the important duties, the sacred claims of friendship, which religion and virtue enforce on every worthy mind.—To show yourselves warm, after this manner, in the cause of your friend, commands esteem, even from those who have personal interest in opposing him. This honourable zeal of friendship, has, in every age, attracted the veneration of mankind. It has consecrated to the latest posterity the names of those who have given up their fortunes, and have even exposed their lives, in behalf of the friends whom they loved ; while ignominy and disgrace have ever been the portion of them, who deserted their friends in the evil day. *Thine own friend forsake not.*

BEFORE concluding, it must not be forgotten, that the injunction of the  
 Wife

SERM. Wise Man in the text, is accompanied  
 XVII. with this remarkable expression; not  
 only *thine own friend*, but also, *thy fa-  
 ther's friend for sake not*. These words  
 bring back to our remembrance the days  
 of former years; and suggest a senti-  
 ment, which cannot but touch every  
 feeling heart. Thine own friend may  
 be dear; thy father's friend ought to be  
 sacred. As long as life remains in any  
 human breast, the memory of those an-  
 tient ties should remain, which con-  
 nected us once with our father, and our  
 father's house. Thy father has perhaps,  
 long ago, gone down to the dust. But  
 when you recal the innocent days of child-  
 hood and youth; when you think of those  
 family transactions which once gladden-  
 ed your hearts; your father's friend, in  
 the midst of these, will rise to your re-  
 membrance. There was a time when  
 you accosted him with respect, or looked  
 up to him with fondness, and was made  
 happy by his kindly notice. Does such  
 a one now survive, and shall he not re-  
 ceive from you some portion of filial  
 reverence

reverence and honour? To disregard E. R. M. and neglect him, is to XVII. burn your father's memory; is to insult the ashes of him who now sleeps in the grave; is to transmit yourselves to those who shall succeed you, as unfeeling and base. *Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not.*

I HAVE pointed out some of the chief duties which belong to virtuous friendship, and some of the principal means by which this sacred bond should be preserved unbroken; this holy flame should be kept alive in the human breast. The spirit, and sentiments, which I have studied to inspire, are such as virtue breathes, and such as true piety should increase. It is thus we fulfil that great law of love, which our divine Master taught. It is thus we prepare ourselves for those happy regions, there *charity never faileth*; where, in the presence of the God of love, eternal and invariable friendships unite together all the blessed; friendships, which,

SERM. which, by no human infirmity disturbed, by death never separated, shall constitute throughout endless ages, a great and distinguished portion of the celestial felicity.

## S E R M O N XVIII.

On the CONDUCT to be held with regard to future EVENTS.

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PROVERBS xxvii. 1.

*Boast not thyself of to-morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.*

**F**ROM these words I purpose to discourse of the proper conduct which we ought to hold with regard to futurity, amidst the present uncertainties of life. Time and life are always going on, and to each of us are preparing changes in our state. What these may be, whether for the better or for the worse, we cannot tell; as it hath pleased the

S E R M.  
XVIII.

the

S E R M. the wisdom of providence to cover futu-  
 XVIII. rity with a veil which no mortal can  
 lift up. In the mean time, none of us  
 can avoid forming designs, and laying  
 plans for the time to come. The present  
 moment is never sufficient to give full  
 employment to the active mind of man,  
 without some excursions into futurity;  
 and in these excursions, the present is  
 often wholly spent. It is therefore of  
 the highest consequence, that a proper  
 direction be given to the mind, in its  
 employments of thought relating to fu-  
 turity. Otherwise, in the prospects  
 which we take of that unknown region,  
 false hopes, or ill-grounded fears, shall  
 flatter or torment us in vain. *We know  
 not, as the Wise Man tells us, what a  
 day may bring forth.* It may, very pro-  
 bably, produce something that we had  
 not looked for; and therefore instead of  
*boasting ourselves of to-morrow,* as the  
 multitude are apt to do, it becomes us  
 to be disciplined and prepared, for what-  
 ever it may bring.

IT is needless to spend much time in S E R M.  
confirming the truth, which is the foun- XVIII.  
dation of the admonition in the text ; in  
proving, either that change and muta-  
bility belong to our present state, or that  
the changes of it cannot be foreseen by  
us. These are truths so obvious and con-  
fessed, than an attempt to confirm them  
is like proving, that all men are to die.  
At the same time, obvious as they are,  
it were to be wished that the thoughts  
of men dwelt upon them more. For,  
by a strange but prevailing deception,  
it would seem, from the general conduct  
of mankind, that almost every one thinks  
his own case an exception from the ge-  
neral law ; and that he may build plans  
with as much confidence on his present  
situation, as if some assurance had been  
given him that it were never to change.  
Hence it has been often observed by se-  
rious persons, that there is no more ge-  
neral cause to which the vices of men  
can be ascribed, their forgetfulness of  
God, and their neglect of duty, than to  
their presuming upon the continuance  
of

SERM. of life, of pleasure, and prosperity.

XVIII.

Look but a little way, my friends, into your own state; and you must unavoidably perceive that, from the beginning, it has been so contrived by Providence, that there should be no permanent stability to man's condition on earth. The seeds of alteration are every where sown. In your health, life, possessions, connections, pleasures, there are causes of decay imperceptibly working; secretly undermining the foundations of what appears to you the most stable; continually tending to abolish the present form of things, and to bring forward new appearances, and new objects in their order: So that nothing is or can be, stationary on earth. All changes, and passes. It is a stream which is ever flowing; a wheel which is ever turning round. When you behold the tree covered with blossoms in the spring, or loaded with fruit in the autumn, as well may you imagine, that those blossoms, or that fruit, are to remain in their place through



through the whole year, as believe that human affairs are to continue, for to day and to-morrow, for this year and the next, proceeding in the same tenor.— To render this reflection still more serious, think, I pray you, on what small and inconsiderable causes those changes depend, which affect the fortunes of men, throughout their whole lives. How soon is evil done! There needs no great bustle or stir, no long preparation of events, to overturn what seems most secure, and to blast what appears most flourishing. A gale of wind rises on the ocean; and the vessel which carried our friends, or our fortunes, is overwhelmed in the deep. A spark of a candle falls by night in some neglected corner; and the whole substance of families is consumed in flames before the morning. A casual blow, or a sudden fall, deranges some of our internal parts; and the rest of life is distress and misery. It is awful to think, at the mercy of how many seeming contingencies we perpetually

S E R M.  
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SERM. perpetually lie, for what we call hap-  
 XVIII. piness in this world.

In the midst, however, of all these apparent contingencies, plans and designs for the future are every day formed; pursuits are undertaken; and life proceeds in its usual train. Fit and proper it is, that life should thus proceed. For the uncertainty of to-morrow was never designed by Providence, to deter us from acting or planning to day; but only to admonish us, that we ought to plan, and to act, soberly and wisely. What that wise and sober conduct is which becomes us, what the rules and precautions are, which, in such a state as ours, respect futurity, I now proceed to shew. They may be comprehended in the following directions. Boast not thyself of to-morrow; Despair not of to-morrow; Delay not till to-morrow what is proper to be done to-day; Prepare thyself for whatever to-morrow may bring forth; Build thy hopes of happiness on something more solid and lasting than what

what either to-day or to-morrow will produce.

S E R M.  
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I. IN the words of the text, *Boast not thyself of to-morrow* ; that is, never presume arrogantly on futurity ; in the most fair and promising state of fortune, beware of pride and vanity ; beware of resting wholly upon yourselves, and forgetting Him who directs the changes of this mutable state. If there be any virtues, which the uncertain condition of the world inculcate on man, they are assuredly, moderation and humility. Man was, for this end, placed in a world, where he knows so little of what is before him, that he might be impressed with a sense of his dependence on the Ruler of the world ; that he might feel the importance of acquiring favour and protection from Heaven, by a life of piety and virtue ; and that, not knowing how soon his own condition may be the same with that of the most wretched, he might be prompted to act towards all his brethren the humane and

S E R M. friendly part.—The favours which Providence bestows upon him at present, he ought to receive with thankfulness, and may enjoy with cheerfulness. Though commanded not to *boast himself of to-morrow*, the meaning of the precept is not, that he must be sad to day. Rejoice he may in the day of prosperity: but certainly, *Rejoice with trembling*, is the inscription that should be written on all human pleasures.

As for them who, intoxicated with those pleasures, become giddy and insolent; who flattered by the illusions of prosperity, make light of every serious admonition which the changes of the world give them, what can I say too strong to alarm them of their danger? —They have said to themselves, *My mountain stands strong, and shall never be moved. To-morrow shall be as this day, and more abundantly. I shall never see adversity.*—Rash and wretched men! are you sensible how impious such words are? To the world, perhaps you dare not utter them; but they speak the secret language of your heart. Know,
you

you are usurping upon Providence; ^{SERM.} you are setting Heaven at defiance; you ^{XVIII.} are not only preparing sharper stings for yourselves, when the changes of life shall come, but you are accelerating those changes; you are fast bringing ruin upon your own heads. For God will not suffer pride in man; and the experience of all ages hath shown, how careful he is to check it. In a thousand memorable instances, the course of his government has been visibly pointed against it. *He sheweth strength with his arm, and scattereth the proud in the imaginations of their hearts. The day of the Lord is upon every one that is proud and lifted up; to humble the lofty looks of man, and to stain the pride of all glory**. Some of the ministers of divine pleasure are commissioned to go forth; and to humble without delay, the *boasters of to-morrow*.

B b 2

II. As

* Luke i. 15.

Isaiah ii. 11. xxiii. 9.

SERM.
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II. As we are not to boast, so neither are we to despair, of to-morrow. The former admonition was directed to those whom prosperity had elated with vain hopes. This is designed for those whom a more adverse situation in life has filled with fears and alarms of what is to come. The reason of both admonitions is the same; *thou knowest not what a day may bring forth*. It may bring forth some unexpected misfortune; and therefore thou shouldst be humble in prosperity. It may bring forth some unforeseen relief; and therefore thou shouldst hope under distress. —It is too common with mankind, to be totally engrossed, and overcome, by present events. Their present condition; whatever it is, they are apt to imagine, will never change; and hence by prosperity they are lifted up, and by adversity are dejected and broken; prone, in the one case, to forget God, in the other, to repine against him. Whereas, the doctrine, which the changes of the world perpetually inculcate

culcate is, that no state of external things should appear so important, or should so affect and agitate our spirits, as to deprive us of a calm, an equal, and a steady mind. Man knoweth neither the good, nor the evil which is before him. In your *patience, therefore, possess your souls*: trusting, in the day of sorrow, that God hath not *forgotten to be gracious*; and that *though weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh to the upright in the morning*.

Distress not yourselves, then with anxious fears about to-morrow. Let me exhort you to dismiss all solicitude, which goes beyond the bounds of prudent precaution. Anxiety, when it seizes the heart is a dangerous disease, productive both of much sin, and much misery. It acts as a corrosive of the mind. It eats out our present enjoyments, and substitutes, in their place, many an acute pain.—The Wise Man, in the text, has advised us *not to boast of to-morrow*; and our Saviour has instructed us to *take no thought for to-morrow*.

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S E R M. *to-morrow* *. Both these directions, **XVIII.** properly understood, are entirely consistent; and the great rule of conduct, respecting futurity, is compounded of them both; requiring us, neither arrogantly to presume on to-morrow, nor to be anxiously, and fearfully solicitous about it. *The morrow*, says our Saviour, *shall take thought for the things of itself.* We shall be better able to judge of the course most proper for us to hold, when events have begun to come forward in their order. Their presence often suggests wiser counsels, and more successful expedients, than it is possible for us to contrive at a distance. By excess of solicitude beforehand, we frequently introduce that confusion of mind, and that hurry and disorder of spirits, which bring us into the most unfavourable state for judging soundly.—Wherefore, never indulge either anxiety, or despair, about futurity. Affright not yourselves with
 imaginary

* Matth. vi. 33.

imaginary terrors. Anticipate not SERM. XVIII. evils, which perhaps may never come.


Make the best which you can of this day, in the fear of God, and in the practice of your duty ; and, having done so, leave to-morrow to itself. *Sufficient for the day, when it comes, will be the evil thereof.*

III. DELAY not till to-morrow any thing which is fit and proper to be done to-day. Remember, that thou art not the lord of to-morrow. Thou art so far from having any title to dispose of it, that thou art ignorant of the most material circumstances relating to it ; not only of what it shall bring forth, but whether thou shalt live to see it.—Notwithstanding the uncontrovertible evidence of this truth, procrastination has, throughout every age, been the ruin of mankind. Dwelling amidst endless projects of what they are hereafter to do, they cannot so properly be said to live, as to be always about to live ; and the future has ever been the gulph in which the present is swallowed

ed

SERM. ed up and loft.—Hence arise many of
 XVIII. those misfortunes which befall, men in
 their worldly concerns. What might at present be arranged in their circumstances with advantage, being delayed to another opportunity, cannot be arranged at all. To-morrow being loaded with the concerns of to-day, in addition to its own, is clogged and embarrassed. Affairs which had been postponed, multiply and crowd upon one another ; till, at last, they prove so intricate and perplexed, and the pressure of business becomes so great, that nothing is left, but to sink under the burden. Of him, therefore, who indulges this lingering and delaying spirit in worldly matters, it is easy to prognosticate that the ruin is not far off.

Evils of the same kind, arising from the same cause, overtake men, in their moral and spiritual interests. There are few, but who are sensible of some things in their character and behaviour, which ought to be corrected, and which, at one time or other, they intend to correct ;
 some

some headstrong passion, which they SERM. XVIII.
design to subdue; some bad habit, 
which they purpose to reform; some
dangerous connection, which they are
resolved to break off. But the conve-
nient season for these reformations is
not yet come. Certain obstacles are in
the way, which they expect by and by
to surmount; and therefore they go on
in peace for the present, in their usual
courses, trusting, at a future day, to
begin their designed improvement. In
the mean time, the angel of death de-
scends; and in the midst of their distant
plans, executes his commission, and car-
ries them away.—Guard against delu-
sions of this kind, which have been fa-
tal to so many.—Thou art now in tran-
quillity, in health, in possession of a
calm mind. Improve these advantages,
for performing all that becomes thee,
as a man, and as a Christian; for who
can tell how long thou shalt be permit-
ted to enjoy them? New alterations of
fortune may be just coming forward;
new troubles in public, or in private life,
about to arise; new exigencies ready to
throw

SERM. throw thee into some condition, which
 XVIII. shall leave thee neither leisure nor opportunity, to execute any of the good purposes thou hast at present in thy mind. Wherefore, trifle no longer with what is so serious, and what may be so critical; but *to day, while it is called to day*, listen to the voice of God, and do his works. *Do now*, as the Wise Man advises, *with thy might whatsoever thy hand findeth to do; for there is no work, nor device, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest.**—Instead of delaying till to-morrow what ought to be done to-day, let me exhort you,

IV. To be every day prepared for whatever to-morrow may bring forth. There is a certain preparation for the vicissitudes of life, in which the multitude are sufficiently busied; providing, as they think, against whatever may happen, by increasing their riches, and strengthening themselves by friends, connections, and worldly honours. But these bulwarks which they erect, are totally insufficient against the dreaded storm

* Eccles. ix. 10.

storm. It is to some other quarter we S E R M.
must look for our defence ; for when it XVIII.
is the world itself, whose changes we
have reason to dread, the world, and
the things of it, cannot afford us pro-
tection. The best preparation for all
the uncertainties of futurity consists, in
a well ordered mind, a good conscience,
and a chearful submission to the will of
Heaven. You know not what shall
be on to-morrow. But there is One
who knows it well ; for his decree hath
fixed it. To him look up with reve-
rence ; and say, “ *Not my will, but thine*
“ *be done ; what thou appointest is ever*
“ *wise, and just, and good.*” Seek to
fulfil the part which he hath assigned
you ; to do the things which he hath
commanded you to do ; and leave all the
rest to him. Whatever to-morrow brings
forth, let it find you employed *in doing*
justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly
with your God ; and then you shall meet
to-morrow without fear, when you
meet it without the upbraidings of guilt.

If it shall bring forth to you any un-
expected good, prepare to receive it
with

S E R M. with gratitude, temperance, and mo-
 X V I I I. desty. If it shall bring forth evil, pre-
 pare to receive it with manly fortitude.
 Let no events of any kind, derange your
 equanimity, or shake your constancy.
 Contract your desires, and moderate
 your hopes. Expect not more from
 the world than it is able to afford you.
 Take it for granted that what is natu-
 rally mutable, will one day change;
 that what was designed to be transient,
 will pass away.—Look forward to futu-
 rity without impatience. Be not desir-
 ous to know it. It belongs to God.
 Let him bring forward the events of
 the world, in his own way. Imagine
 that you continually hear those words,
 which our Lord once addressed to Pe-
 ter, when he was enquiring about what
 was to happen to a fellow-disciple,
What is that to thee? Follow thou me.
 Amidst all the uncertainty of future
 events, this road of clear and plain duty
 lies before you; follow Christ, and in-
 quire no farther. Seek no crooked path,
 in order to avoid impending dangers.
Turn not to the right hand, nor to the
left;

left ; but commit thy way unto the Lord ; SERM.
trust also in him, and he shall bring to pass XVIII.
the desires of thy heart.

V. BUILD your hopes of happiness on somewhat more solid and lasting, than what either to-day or to-morrow are likely to produce. From what has been said, you may clearly perceive, that he who rests wholly upon this world, builds his house upon the sand. This life, by means of wisdom and virtue, may be rendered to a good man, a tolerable, nay, a comfortable, state. But he who expects complete happiness from it, will be greatly deceived. Man, in his most flourishing condition, were much to be pitied, if he was destitute of any higher hope. Rolling from change to change, throughout all the days of his life, with a dark and unknown prospect always before him in futurity, what would avail a few short interrupted glimpses of happiness, which, from time to time, he was permitted to enjoy ? Can we believe, that only for such a state as this, man was designed

S E R M. designed by his great and good Creator ?

XVIII.

—No : Let us *blefs the God and Father of our Lord Jefus Cbrift, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again into a lively hope, by the refurrection of Cbrift from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.* Here is the Rock on which the mind, however toft by the storms of life, can securely reft. Here is the object to which a wife man will bend his chief attention, that, after having acted his part on earth with fidelity and honour, he may be enabled, through the merits of his Saviour, to look for a place in the mansions of eternal and untroubled peace. This prospect is the great corrective of the present vanity of human life. It gives significancy and importance to its most transitory scenes ; and, in the midst of its mutability, discovers one fixed point of reft. He who is habitually influenced by the hope of immortality, will be able to look without difmay on the changes of the world. He will neither boast of to-morrow, nor be afraid of it ;

but

but will pass through the varieties of S E R M.
life with a manly and unbroken mind ; XVIII.
with a noble superiority to those fears
and expectations, those cares and sor-
rows, which agitate the multitude.—
Such are the native effects of Christian
faith and hope. To them alone it be-
longs, to surmount all the discouragements
to which we are now exposed ;
to render our life comfortable, and our
death blessed ; nay, to make *the day of
our death better than the day of our birth,*

SERMON XIX.

On following the MULTITUDE to do
EVIL.

EXODUS xxiii. 2.

Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil.

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IN this world, we are placed as companions and assistants to one another. Depending, for most of the comforts of life, on mutual intercourse and aid, it was necessary, that we should be formed to desire the company, and to take pleasure in the good will of our fellows. But this sociability of man, though essential to his present

present condition, has, like many other S E R M.
good principles, been unhappily warped XIX.
from its original purpose; and, in the
present state of the world, has proved
the cause of much evil. For, as vice has
abounded in every age, it hath propa-
gated itself much more easily by the assist-
ance of this social disposition. We natu-
rally mould ourselves on the pattern of
prevailing manners; and corruption is
communicated from one to another. By
mutually giving, and taking, the exam-
ple of sinful liberties, licentiousness
spreads and grows; each justifies him-
self by his neighbour; and the multitude
of sinners strengthen one another's
hands to commit iniquity. In all ages of
the world, custom has had more power
than reason. Few take the trouble of
inquiring what is the right path;
the greater part content themselves with
following that in which the multitude
have gone before them. No exhorta-
tion, therefore, is more necessary to be
frequently given, and to be seriously en-
forced, than that which we receive from

S E R M. the text ; *Thou shalt not follow a multi-*
 XIX. *tude to do evil.*

To acquire a full view of any danger to which we are exposed, is the first measure to be taken, in order to our safety. Let us then begin the subject, with considering how much we are in hazard of being misled into vice by the general manners which we behold around us. No virtue is more necessary to a Christian, but scarcely is there any more difficult to be put in practice, than that firmness of mind which can enable a man to maintain his principles, and to stand his ground against the torrent of custom, fashion, and example. Example has upon all minds a secret and insinuating influence, even when we ourselves are insensible of its operation. We imperceptibly slide into some resemblance of the manners of those with whom we have frequent intercourse. This often shows itself, in the most indifferent things. But the resemblance is still more readily contracted, when there is something

thing within ourselves, that leans to the same side which is countenanced by the practice of others. We are always glad to find an apology for indulging our inclinations and passions; and the example of the multitude too readily suggests that apology. Even before corruption has made great progress in our hearts, sometimes, mere complaisance and good nature incline us to fall in with the ways of others. Sometimes, timidity and false shame prevent our differing from them: Frequently, expectation and interest impel us strongly to comply. How great is the danger we incur, when, in times of prevailing vice, all these principles of imitation and compliance unite together against our virtue?

The world is too justly said by scripture to *lie in wickedness*. It is a school wherein every vice is taught, and too easily learned. Even from our earliest childhood, false sentiments are instilled into our minds. We are bred up in admiration of the external show of life. We are accustomed, as soon as we can

S E R M. understand any thing, to hear riches and
 XIX. honours spoken of as the chief goods of
 men, and proposed to us as the objects
 to which our future pursuits are to be
 directed. We see the measures of out-
 ward respect and deference taken from
 these alone. Religion and virtue are
 recommended to us, in a formal man-
 ner, by our teachers and instructors; but
 all improvements of the mind and heart,
 are visibly placed by the world, in an
 inferior rank to the advantages of for-
 tune. Vices, that chance to be fashi-
 onable, are treated as slight failings; and
 coloured over, in common discourse,
 with those soft and gentle names which
 express no condemnation. We enter,
 perhaps, on the world, with good prin-
 ciples, and an aversion to downright vice.
 But when, as we advance in life, we be-
 come initiated in that mystery of ini-
 quity, which is called, the way of the
 world; when we meet with deceit and
 artifice in all ranks of men; when we
 behold iniquity authorized by great
 names, and often rewarded with suc-
 cess

cess and advancement, our original S E R M,
good impressions too soon decay. The XIX.
practice of the multitude renders vice
familiar to our thoughts; and gradually
wears off the abhorrence with which we
once beheld it. We begin to think, that
what is so very general, cannot be highly
criminal. The malignity of sin appears
diminished, by so many being sharers in
the reproach; and instead of men's vices
detracting, as they ought to do, from
our good opinion of the men, our at-
tachment to the men oftener reconciles
us to the vices of which they are guilty.

The countenance which sin receives
from the practice of the multitude, not
only removes the restraints which are
imposed by modesty and shame; but,
such is the degeneracy of the world,
that shame is too often employed against
the cause of religion and virtue. The
ridicule of the giddy and unthinking
bears down the conviction of the sober
and modest. Against their own belief,
they appear to adopt the notions of the
infidel; and against their own choice,
they

S E R M. they join in the vices of the libertine;
 XIX. that they may not be reproached as persons of a narrow mind, and still enslaved to the prejudices of education. How much reason is there to believe that, merely from this timidity of temper, many, whose principles are on the side of religion and virtue, are nevertheless found *walking in the way of sinners, and sitting in the chair of the scornful?*—Interest, too, often coincides with this weakness of disposition, in tempting such persons to follow the multitude. To fall in with the prevailing taste, to suit themselves to the passions of the great, or to the humours of the low, with whom they chance to be connected, appears the readiest way to rise in the world. Hence they are naturally led to relinquish the firmness of an upright character, for that supple and versable turn, which accommodates itself to the times, and assumes whatever appearance seems most convenient for interest. Such are the dangers to which we are exposed, in times of corruption, of following

showing the multitude to do evil; dangers which require our most serious attention and care, in order to guard ourselves against them.—I proceed to lay such considerations before you as may be useful for that purpose.

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. In the *first* place. Let us remember that the multitude are very bad guides; are so far from having a title to implicit regard, that he who blindly follows them, may be presumed to err. For prejudice, and passion, are known to sway the crowd. They are struck by the outside of things; they inquire superficially, admire false appearances, and pursue false goods. Their opinions are for the most part hastily formed, and of course are variable, floating, and inconsistent. In every age, how small is the number of those who are guided by reason, and calm inquiry? How few do we find, who have the wisdom to think and judge for themselves, and have steadiness to follow out their own judgment? Ignorance, and low education, darken
the

S E R M. the views of the vulgar. Fashion and
 XIX. prejudice, vanity and pleasure, corrupt
 the sentiments of the great. The exam-
 ple of neither, affords any standard of
 what is right and wise. If the philoso-
 pher, when employed in the pursuit of
 truth, finds it necessary to disregard es-
 tablished prejudices and popular opinion,
 shall we, in the more important inquiry
 after the rule of life, submit to such
 blind guidance as the practice of the
 many; esteeming whatever they ad-
 mire, and following wherever they lead?
 Be assured, that he who sets up the ge-
 neral opinion as the standard of truth, or
 the general practice as the measure of
 right, is likely, upon such a foundation,
 to build no other superstructure except
 vice and folly. If the practice of the mul-
 titude be a good pattern for our imitation,
 their opinions surely should be as good a
 rule for our belief. Upon this principle,
 we must exchange Christianity for Paga-
 nism or Mahometanism, and the light of
 the Reformation for the superstitions of
 Popery;

Popery; for these latter have ever had, S E R M.
and still have; the numbers and the mul- XIX.
titude on their side.—Our Saviour has
sufficiently characterised the way of the
world, when he describes the *broad road*
in which the multitudes go, as the *road*
which leads to destruction; and the path
which leads to happiness, as a *narrow*
path, which fewer find. From which
it is an easy inference, that to have the
multitude on our side, is so far from af-
fording any presumption of our being
safe, that it should lead us to suspect that
we are holding the course of danger.

IN the *second* place, as the practice of
the multitude is no argument of a good
practice, so it cannot afford us either jus-
tification, or safety, in what is evil.—It
affords us, I say, no justification. Truth
and error, virtue and vice, are things of
immutable nature. The difference be-
tween them is grounded on that basis of
eternal reason, which no opinions or cus-
toms of men can affect or alter. Whether
virtue

SER M. virtue be esteemed, or not, in the world,
 XIX.

this makes it neither more nor less estimable in itself. It carries always a divine authority, which men cannot impair. It shines with an essential lustre, which praise cannot brighten, nor reproach tarnish. It has a right to regulate the opinions of men; but by their opinions cannot be controlled. Its nature continues invariably the same, though all the multitude of fools should concur in endeavouring to turn it into ridicule. *Wo unto them,* says the prophet Isaiah *that call evil, good, and good, evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.—Their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossoms shall go up as dust; because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the holy one of Israel*.*

As the practice of the multitude furnishes

* Isaiah v. 20, 24.

wishes no justification to the sinner, so SERM.
neither does it afford him any safety. XIX.

Religion is altogether a matter of personal concern. God hath delivered to every man the rule of life; and every man must think and act for himself; because for himself he is to answer. If others be wicked, it will be the worse for them; but it will not on that account, be the better for us, if we shall be evil also. Let vice be ever so prevalent, it is still that *evil thing which the Lord abhorreth*; and though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not escape unpunished. So far is the number of offenders from furnishing any ground of safety, that it calls more loudly for divine justice to interpose. It is as easy for the Almighty arm to crush a whole guilty society, as to punish a single individual; and when the disobedient subjects of God countenance and strengthen one another in licentiousness, by transgressing in troops and bands, it becomes high time for his government to exert itself, and let its vengeance forth.—One
could

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could scarcely think that any professor of Christian faith would fancy to himself any apology from the way of the world, when he knows that the declared design of his religion was, to distinguish him from the world, which is said to *lie in sin*; and that Christ came to call out for himself *a peculiar people*, whose character it should be, *not to be conformed to the world, but transformed by the renewing of their minds*.—So little, indeed, can the practice of the world either justify or extenuate vice, that it deserves our serious consideration.

In the *third* place, whether there be not several circumstances, which peculiarly aggravate the guilt of those who follow the multitude in evil. Do you not, thereby, strengthen the power of sin, and perpetuate the pernicious influence of bad example? By striking off from the corrupted crowd, you might be eminently useful. You might animate and recover many, whom weakness and timidity keep under

under bondage to the customs of the world; whereas, by tamely yielding to the current of vice, you render that current stronger for carrying others along; you add weight and stability to the bad cause; you lend to the multitude all the force of your example, for drawing others after them, to the commission of evil.—While you are thus accessory to the ruin of others, you are, at the same time, stamping your own character with the foulest and deepest impressions of corruption. By surrendering your judgment and your conscience to the multitude, you betray the rights, and degrade the honour of the rational nature. Nothing great or worthy can be expected of him, who instead of considering what is right in itself, and what part it is fittest for one in his station to act, is only considering what the world will think, or say of him; what sort of behaviour will pass with the fairest show, and be most calculated to please the many. When a man has thus given up the liberty

S E R M.
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S E R M. liberty and independence of his mind, we
 XIX. can no longer reckon upon him in any
 thing. We cannot tell how far he may
 be carried in vice. There is too much
 ground to dread, that he will lie, dissem-
 ble, and betray; changing himself, with-
 out scruple, into every shape that will
 find favour among those whom he seeks
 to gain.—While this servility to the
 world infers baseness towards men, it
 involves also the highest impiety to-
 wards God. It shows that we yield to
 the world that reverence and submission
 which is only due to the divine law.
 We treat the government of the Al-
 mighty with scorn; as if his precepts
 deserved to be obeyed, only when they
 suited the caprice and the follies of the
 multitude; and were entitled to no re-
 gard, as soon as they contradicted the
 reigning customs and fashions of the
 world.—While such conduct carries in
 it so much wickedness and folly, let us
 observe,

In the *fourth* place, that the most ex-
 cellent and honourable character, which
 can

can adorn a man and a Christian, is S E R M.
acquired, by resisting the torrent of vice, XIX.
and adhering to the cause of God and
virtue against a corrupted multitude.
It will be found to hold in general, that
all those, who, in any of the great lines
of life; have distinguished themselves for
thinking profoundly, and acting nobly,
have despised popular prejudices, and
departed, in several things, from the
common ways of the world. On no
occasion is this more requisite for true
honour, than where religion and mora-
lity are concerned. In times of prevailing
licentioufness, to maintain unblemished
virtue, and uncorrupted integrity; in a
public or a private cause, to stand firm
by what is fair and just, amidst discour-
agements and opposition; despising
groundless censure and reproach; dis-
daining all compliance with public
manners, when they are vicious and
unlawful; and never ashamed of
the punctual discharge of every duty
towards God and man;—this is what
shows true greatness of spirit, and will
force approbation even from the dege-
nerate

SERMON. ^{XIX.} *nerate multitude themselves.* “This is
 “the man,” their conscience will oblige
 them to acknowledge, “whom we are
 “unable to bend to mean condescen-
 “sions. We see it in vain either to flat-
 “ter or to threaten him? he rests on a
 “principle within, which we cannot
 “shake. To this man you may, on
 “any occasion, safely commit your
 “cause. He is incapable of betraying
 “his trust, or deserting his friend, or
 “denying his faith.” Thus *his righte-
 ousness comes forth as the light, and his-
 judgment as the noon-day.*

It is, accordingly, this steady inflexible
 virtue, this regard to principle, superior
 to all custom and opinion, which pecu-
 liarly marked the characters of those, in
 any age, who have shone as saints or
 heroes; and has consecrated their me-
 mory to all posterity. It was this that
 obtained to antient *Enoch* the most
 singular testimony of honour from
 heaven. He continued to *walk with
 God*, when the world apostatized
 from him. He pleased God, and
 was beloved of him; so that, living
 among

living among finners, he was translated S E R M.
 to heaven without seeing death; *Yea,* XIX.
speedily was he taken away, lest wicked-
ness should have altered his understanding
*or deceit beguiled his soul.** When Sodom
 could not furnish ten righteous men to
 save it, *Lot* remained unspotted amidst
 the contagion. He lived like an angel
 among spirits of darkness; and the de-
 stroying flame was not permitted to go
 forth, till the good man was called away
 by a heavenly messenger from his de-
 voted city. When *all flesh had corrupt-*
ed their way upon the earth, then lived
Noah, a righteous man, and a preacher
 of righteousness. He stood alone, and
 was scoffed by the profane crew. But
 they by the deluge were swept away;
 while on him, Providence conferred the
 immortal honour, of being the restorer
 of a better race, and the father of a new
 world. Such examples as these, and such
 honours conferred by God on them
 who withstood the multitude of evil
 doers, should often be present to our
 minds. Let us oppose them to the
 VOL. IV. D d numbers

* Wisdom of Solomon, iv. 11.

SERM. numbers of low and corrupt examples, **XIX.** which we behold around us; and when we are in hazard of being swayed by such, let us fortify our virtue, by thinking of those who, in former times, shone like stars in the midst of surrounding darkness, and are now shining in the kingdom of heaven, *as the brightness of the firmament, for ever and ever.* —As our honour is thus deeply concerned in our acting a steadfast and virtuous part, let us also consider,

In the *fifth* place, How little, in point of interest, can be gained by the favour of the multitude, and how much will certainly be lost, by following them to do evil. We may thereby, render ourselves more agreeable to some with whom we are connected; and by artful compliances, may please ourselves with the prospect of promoting our fortune. But these advantages, such as they are, remain doubtful and uncertain. The wind of popular opinion is ever shifting. It will often leave us at a loss what course to steer; and, after all our trouble

ble

ble and anxiety to catch the favourable S E R M.
gale, it may on a sudden forsake us. XIX.

For the versatility of character, the meanness and inconsistency of conduct, into which a dependent on the multitude is betrayed, frequently render him, in the end, an object of contempt to those whom he sought to please. But supposing him successful in his views, no worldly advantages, which are purchased by dishonourable means, can be either solid or lasting. They bring no genuine satisfaction to a man, who is conscious to himself of having given up his principles to serve the world. As long as he could be satisfied with his own conduct, he might bear up under undeserved discouragement; but when he becomes despicable in his own eyes, worldly honours lose their lustre.—
What can the multitude do for you, after you have followed them in evil? They cannot restore to you the peace of an innocent mind, nor heal the sorrows of a wounded spirit, nor shield you from the displeasure of God. They can do little to support you in the hour of af-

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 fiction, and nothing to deliver your souls in the day of death. Forsaken and disconsolate, the world, for the most part, casts off its votaries in the end; and when you compute the final amount, it will prove a very small consolation, that, as you have had sharers in guilt, you shall have companions also in punishment.

Look forward to the issue of things. The multitude of men possess now, in a great measure, the distribution of praise and censure, of success and disappointment, according to their caprice. But this confused and promiscuous distribution is not always to subsist. The day cometh, when we all are to appear before a more discerning Judge, and a more impartial tribunal. The day cometh, when our Lord Jesus Christ, shall descend from heaven in all the glory of his Father, to unveil every character, and to *render to every man according to his works*. At that day, how shall he lift up his head, who hath been all his life the slave of the world's opinion; who hath moulded his principles and
 his

his practice, solely to please the multi-
tude; who hath been *ashamed of his Sa-* SERM.
viour and his words; and to gain favour ^{XIX.}
with men, hath apostatised from the
native sentiments and dictates of his
heart?—To say all in one word; there
is a contest now between God and the
world. These form the opposite sides
which divide mankind. Consider well,
to which of these you will chuse to ad-
here. On the one side, lie your alle-
giance, your honour, and your interest;
on the other, lie your guilt and your
shame. For the one, conscience and
reason, for the other passion, and incli-
nation, plead. On the one hand, are
the approbation of God, immortal ho-
nour, and divine rewards; on the other,
—remember and beware,—are the
stings of conscience, endless punish-
ment, and endless infamy.

S E R M O N XX.

On the WISDOM of GOD.*

I TIMOTHY i. 17.

*Now unto the King Eternal, immortal,
invisible, the only Wise God, be honour
and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.*

SERM. **I**T is of the highest importance to re-
XX. **l**igious conduct, that our minds be
filled with suitable conceptions of the
attributes of God. They are the foun-
dations

* This concluding discourse is chiefly intended, to be a general recapitulation of instances of the wisdom of Providence, several of which have been more fully illustrated in other discourses, contained in this, or in some of the preceding volumes.

dations of our reverence for him ; and reverence is the foundation of religion. SERM.
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All the divine perfections are interesting to man. Almighty power, in conjunction with Eternity and Omnipresence, naturally inspires solemn awe. Infinite Goodness relieves the mind from that oppression which Power alone would produce ; and, from our experience of present benefits, and our remembrance of the past, creates love, gratitude, and trust. In the middle between these, stands the contemplation of divine Wisdom, which conjoins impressions of awe with those of comfort ; and while it humbles us into profound submission, encourages, at the same time our reliance on that *King eternal, immortal, and invisible*, who is justly stiled in the text, *the only wise God*.

Among men, wisdom is a quality entirely different from cunning or craft. It always supposes good and fair intention in the person who possesses it ; and imports, that laudable ends are pursued
by

SERM. by proper and justifiable means. In like
XX. manner wisdom in the Supreme Being
 cannot be separated from the rectitude
 of his nature. It is, in him, an exer-
 tion of benevolence ; and imports, that
 the purposes of justice and goodness are
 carried on and accomplished, by means
 the most effectual. To meditate on
 some of those instances in which this
 divine wisdom is displayed, cannot but
 be highly favourable to the impressions
 both of piety, and of virtue.

IT is difficult to say, whether the
 natural, or the moral, world, afford the
 most conspicuous and striking displays
 of the wisdom of God. Not one,
 nor many discourses nor indeed the stu-
 dy and labour of a whole life, were,
 in any degree, sufficient to explore
 them. Of the proofs of wisdom which
 the natural world affords, I cannot at-
 tempt now to discourse. Any illus-
 tration of these would lead to discus-
 sions of a scientific kind, which more
 properly

properly belong to the philosopher; and S E R M.
on which philosophy has often employ- XX.
ed itself, with much utility and honour.

I shall only takè notice that, in proportion as human knowledge hath enlarged its sphere of research and discovery, in the same proportion, hath the wisdom of the Creator struck the minds of all inquirers and observers, with the highest admiration. All nature is in truth a scene of wonders. In the disposition of the heavenly bodies, and the general arrangement of the system of the universe; in the structure of the earth; in the endless variety of living creatures that fill it; and in the provision made for them all, to enable them to fulfil the ends of their being, it is not easy to determine, whether power, wisdom, or goodness be most conspicuous. It belongs not only to *the heavens to declare the glory of God, and to the firmament to shew forth his handy-work*; in the smallest and most inconsiderable, as well as in the most illustrious works of God, equal marks appear of profound design and consummate

SERM. mate art. It has been justly said, that
 {^{XX.} there is not a vegetable that grows, nor
 an insect that moves, but what is sufficient to confound the atheist, and to afford the candid observer endless materials of devout adoration and praise.

WHEN we return to the moral world, the field of admiration which opens to us is no less extensive and striking. I can only mention a few instances of that exquisite wisdom which everywhere meet us.

In the *first* place, let us attend to the constitution of human nature. Though we are taught by revelation, to consider it as now impaired by the fall, yet, as it stands, we behold the traces of a noble structure, planned and executed with the highest skill. All the powers and faculties bestowed on man are such as perfectly suit his condition, and adapt him to the purposes for which he was designed.—Senses were given him, that he might distinguish what is necessary for the preservation and welfare of his body. Now, sup-
 pose

pose that any one of those senses, the sight, for instance, or the hearing, or the touch, had been in a considerable degree either more blunt, or more acute, than it is at present, what an unhappy change would this have made upon our state? on the one hand, greater imperfection of the organs, would have deprived us of all the comfort and advantage which we now enjoy from such powers. On the other hand, a greater degree of exquisite sensibility in them, would have rendered life a burden to us. Our senses, instead of being inlets to knowledge and pleasure, would then have become constant avenues to uneasiness and pain. Their powers, therefore, are skilfully adjusted to that measure of strength, which allows them to answer the purposes of health, safety, and comfort; without either falling short of this line of usefulness, or improperly, and hurtfully stretching beyond it.

In the mind appetites and passions were placed, as the moving powers of
the

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S E R M. the soul, to impel its activity. But as
 XX. their impulse required regulation and
 restraint, reason was at the same time,
 conferred as the directing power.—Of
 all our passions, self-love, and the desire
 of self-preservation, were, with the ut-
 most propriety made the strongest, for
 a reason which the meanest capacity
 may comprehend. Every man is most
 immediately committed by Providence
 to his own care and charge. He knows
 his own situation best; and has more
 opportunities of promoting his own
 happiness, than he can have of advanc-
 ing the happiness of any other person.

It was therefore fit and wise, that,
 by the strongest instinct, he should be
 prompted to attend to himself.—At the
 same time, as no man standing alone is
 sufficient for his own welfare, it was
 necessary that, by mutual sympathy
 and social instincts, we should be drawn
 to give aid to one another. Here it
 deserves our particular notice, that the
 force of those social instincts is, with
 admirable propriety proportioned by
 Providence

Providence to the degree of their usefulness and importance*. Thus, that parental affection, which the helpless state of infancy and childhood renders so needful, is made the strongest of them all. Next, come those ties of blood, which prompt mutual kindness among those who are intimately joined together by brotherhood, and other family connections. To these succeeds that valuable instinct of pity, which impels us to assist the distressed, wherever we behold them. To take part with others in their good fortune belongs to man's social nature, and increases the sum of happiness. At the same time, to take part with the prosperous is less necessary than to sympathise with the unhappy; and therefore the principle which prompts us to *rejoice with them that rejoice*, is made not to be so strong as that which impels us to *weep with them that weep*.

But they are not only the laudable and important parts of our disposition, which

* See Sermon II. Vol. iii.

each other, than might at first be supposed. It hath smoothed the most rugged tracts of human life; and hath gilded with rays of borrowed light its most dreary scenes.

One instance of Divine wisdom, in framing our nature, is so remarkable as to demand particular attention; that is, the measure according to which, God hath dispensed knowledge and ignorance to man. There is nothing of which we are more ready to complain, than of our narrow and confined views of nature, and of Providence, and of all things around us: And yet, upon examination, it will be found, that our views extend on every side, just as far as they ought; and that, to see and know more than is allowed us, instead of bringing any advantage, would produce certain misery*.—We pry, for instance, with impatient curiosity, into future events. Happily for us, they are veiled and covered up; and one peep behind

* See Serm. IV, Vol. ii and Serm. IX. Vol. iv.

SERM. behind that veil, were it permitted,
 XX. would be sufficient to poison the whole
 comfort of our days, by the anticipation of sorrows to come.—In like manner, we often wish with eagerness to penetrate into the secrets of nature, to look into the invisible world, and to be made acquainted with the whole destiny of man. Our wish is denied; we are environed on all hands with mystery; and that mystery is our happiness. For were those great invisible objects fully disclosed, the sight of them would confound and overwhelm us. It would either totally derange our feeble faculties; or would engross our attention to such a degree, as to lay us aside from the business and concerns of this world. It would have the same effect, as if we were carried away from the earth, and mingled among the inhabitants of some other planet.—The knowledge that is allowed to us, was designed to fit us for acting our part in our present state. At the exact point therefore, where usefulness ends, knowledge stops, and ignorance commences.

Light

Light shines upon us, as long as it serves S E R M.
to guide our path; but forsakes us, as XX.
soon as it becomes noxious to the eye; and salutary darkness is appointed to close the scene.—Thoughtless and stupid must that man be, who, in all this furniture of the human mind, in this exact adjustment of its several powers to the great purposes of life, discerns not the hand of adorable Wisdom, as well as of infinite Goodness.

IN the *second* place, Let us contemplate the same wisdom, as exhibiting itself to us in the moral government of the world. We are informed by revelation, that this life is designed by Providence to be an introductory part of existence to intelligent beings; a state of education and discipline, where creatures fallen from their original rank, may gradually recover their rectitude and virtue. Under this view, which is in itself perfectly consonant to all that reason discovers, we shall find the general course of human affairs, confused as it may sometimes appear, to have

SERM. been ordered with exquisite wisdom.

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—It was necessary to such a state, that all the active powers of man should be brought forth into exercise, and completely tried. It became proper, therefore, that there should be a mixture of characters in the world; and that men should be shewn in a variety of situations*. Hence that diversity of tempers and dispositions which are found in society; those inequalities in rank and station, which we see taking place; and those different talents and inclinations which prompt men to different pursuits. By these means, every department in society is filled up; and every man has some sphere prepared for him, in which he can act. He is brought forth as on a busy stage, where opportunity is given for his character to display itself fully.—His life is with great propriety, varied by interchanges of prosperity and adversity. Always prosperous, he would become dissipated, indolent, and giddy: Always afflicted, he

* See Serm. IV. Vol. iv.

he would be fretful, dejected, and full-^{SERM.}
len. There are few persons, therefore, ^{XX.}
or none, whose lot shares not of both
these states; in order that every dispo-
sition of the heart may be explored, and
every mean of improvement afforded.
—As man is ultimately designed for a
higher state of existence than the pre-
sent, it was not proper that this world
should prove a paradise to him, or
should afford him that complete satis-
faction which he incessantly pursues.
Disappointments, therefore, are often
made to blast his hopes; and, even
while the comforts of life last, they are
always mixed with some troubles; in
order that an excessive attachment to
this world may gradually be loosened.
The course of things is evidently so or-
dered by Providence, that occurrences
shall be always happening, to bring
down the most prosperous to a level
with the rest of his brethren, and to
raise up in their turn, the low and the
distressed.

SERM.

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In the midst of those vicissitudes, which are so obviously conducive to improvement, both wisdom and goodness required, that the supreme Governor of the world should be seen to protect the interests, and favour the side of virtue. But in the degree of evidence, with which this was to be shown, it was no less requisite, that a proper temperament should be observed. Had virtue been always completely rewarded, and made happy on earth, men would no longer have had a motive for aspiring to a more blessed state. In the case of every crime, had divine justice interposed to bring complete punishment on the head of the criminal; or had all the felicity which is prepared for the just in a future world, and all the misery which there awaits the wicked, been already displayed to the view, and rendered sensible to the feelings of men, there would have been an end of that state of trial, for which our whole condition on earth was intended. It was necessary, therefore, that, at present,

present, we should *see through a glass* ^{E. R. M.} ~~darkly~~. A certain degree of mystery and ^{XX.} obscurity was, with perfect wisdom, left on the conduct of the Almighty*.-- But, amidst that obscurity, sufficient encouragement and support is in the mean time given to virtue; sufficient ground is afforded for the full belief, that it is what the Deity loves, and will finally reward. His approbation of it is signified to every man by the voice of conscience. Inward satisfaction and peace are made always to belong to it; and general esteem and honour, for the most part, to attend it. On the other hand, the wicked, in ~~no~~ situation of life, are allowed to be truly happy. Their vices and their passions are made to trouble their prosperity; and their punishment to grow out of their crimes, Let any one attentively recollect the material incidents of his life; and he will, for the most part, be able to trace the chief misfortunes which have be-
fallen

* See Sermon. IV. Vol. i.

SERM. fallen him, to some guilt he has contracted, or some folly he has committed.* Such is the profound wisdom with which Providence conducts its counsels, that, although it does not appear to interpose, men are made to reap from their actions, the fruits which they had deserved; their iniquities to correct them, and their backslidings to reprove them; and while they suffer, they are forced to acknowledge the justice of their punishment.—These are not matters of rare or occasional observation; but deeply interwoven with the texture of human affairs. They discover a regular plan, a formed system, according to which the whole train of Providence proceeds; and which manifests to every serious observer the consummate wisdom of its Author.—As thus, in the constitution of human nature, and in the moral government of the world, divine wisdom so remarkably appears, I must observe,

In

* See Serm. XIII. Vol. iv.

IN the *third* place, That in the re-^{SERM.}
demption of the world, and in the œco-^{XX.}
nomy of grace, it shines no less conspi-
cuously. The subject which opens to
us here is too extensive to be fully il-
lustrated at present; but the great lines
of it are obvious*.—In carrying on a
plan, by which forgiveness was to be
dispensed to an offending race, wisdom
required that the authority of the le-
gislator should be fully preserved, and
no such relaxation be introduced into
government, as might give licence or
encouragement to offenders. Accord-
ingly, the most admirable provision
was made for these important purpo-
ses, by the interposition of the Son of
God suffering and dying for finners.
The sovereign awe of justice is main-
tained, while justice is tempered with
mercy. Men are bound to righteous-
ness, under the highest sanctions; and
ample security and consolation are,
at

* See Serm. V. Vol. i.—Serm. V. Vol. ii.—Serm.
XV. Vol. iii.—Serm. V. Vol. ix.

S E R M. at the same time, afforded to the penitent. ^{XX} By the instructions, and example, of their Saviour, they are instructed in their duty; and through a Mediator and Intercessor, they are encouraged to offer their worship and prayers to the Almighty. They are assured that, in whatever is too arduous for human nature to perform, they shall be assisted by a divine Spirit; and under all trials and difficulties, they are supported by the express promise of that eternal life, which is brought to light by the gospel.—It is not possible for the understanding to conceive any method of salvation, planned with more goodness, and executed with more wisdom, than what is shown in the gospel of Christ. The consideration of this constitution alone, gives us full reason to join in that exclamation of the Apostle: *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!**

FROM

* Rom. ii. 33.

FROM this short survey which we SERM.
have taken of Divine wisdom, as dis- XX
covering itself, in the whole complex
frame of the moral world; in the con-
stitution of human nature; in the go-
vernment of human affairs; and in the
redemption of the human race; we
cannot but perceive how much reason
we have to prostrate ourselves before
God, and with all humility to worship
and adore.—When we view that im-
mense structure of the universe in
which we dwell; when we think of
Him, whose wisdom has planned the
whole system of being; whose mind
comprehends, whose counsels direct,
the whole course of events, from the
beginning to the end of time, by whom
nothing is so inconsiderable as to be
overlooked, or so transient as to be for-
gotten; who attends to the concerns of
the poor man in his cottage, while he
is steering the sun and the moon in
their course through the heavens; into
what astonishment and self-annihilation
do we fall! Before him all our boasted
knowledge

SERM. knowledge is ignorance, and our wisdom is folly. Wherever we cast our eyes on his works and ways, we find all things adjusted in *number, weight, and measure*; and after all that we can survey, Lo! these are but a part of his ways; and *how small a portion is heard of him!*

It is the power of God, which produces among the multitude of men any impressions of religion. When thunder roars in the heavens, or an earthquake shakes the ground, they are struck with awe, and disposed to worship an invisible power. But such impressions of Deity are occasional, and transitory. The lasting reverence of a Supreme Being arises, in a well informed mind, from the display of that infinite wisdom which all the universe presents. Its operations are constantly, though silently, going on around us. We may view it in the peaceful and sedate state of the universe, as well as in its greatest commotions; we behold it in every insect that moves on the ground, at the same time that we admire

mire it in the revolutions of the celestial bodies. Happy for us, if the contemplation shall nourish that temper of habitual devotion, which so well becomes dependent beings, and is so intimately connected with all virtue.*

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But the chief effect that ought to be produced by meditation on the divine wisdom, is perfect resignation to the Governor of the universe, and entire trust in his administration. Our private misfortunes and disappointments are too often the subject of querulous complaints, and even of unjust suspicions of Providence. But when in the whole natural and moral world, we behold an arrangement of things which plainly discovers the most consummate wisdom, can we believe, that in the arrangement of our petty concerns, this wisdom is dormant and neglectful? How much more reason is there to think, that our ignorance of the divine plans misleads our judgment, than that the

* See Serm. xix. Vol. iii.

SERM. the wisdom of the Almighty has erred
 XX. in directing our private affairs?—Divine wisdom, as I observed in the beginning, is an exertion of divine benevolence. It has, it can have, no other scope than to accomplish the best ends, by the most proper means. Let the Wisdom, therefore, and the Goodness, of the Deity, be ever conjoined in our idea. Let every new discovery of divine wisdom, be a new ground of hope, of joy, and of cordial submission, to every virtuous man. Let him be thankful that he lives in a world, where nothing happens to him by chance, or at random; but where a great, a wise, and beneficent Mind continually superintends every event.

Under the faith of this great principle of religion, let us proceed in the course of our duty, with steadfast and undismayed mind. Let us retain faithful allegiance to our Creator and our Redeemer; and then we may always hope the best; and *cast our care upon him who careth for us. Wait on the Lord;*

Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart. Although thou sayest, thou canst not see him, yet judgment is before him; therefore trust thou in him.—Let us begin every undertaking, with humble dependence on his assistance for enabling us to prosecute it to the end. When our undertakings are finished, and the close of life approaches, with praise to him let us conclude all our labours.

Unto the King Eternal, immortal, invisible, the only Wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

F I N I S.

3 1 1 2 *



